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**THE TRIBES OF LOUIS: FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND SECRET SOCIETIES IN THE
WORKS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**

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Except for ideas and passages properly acknowledged in the text, this dissertation is my own work and the result of my own research. It has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

Sarah Ames

ABSTRACT

If the Victorians privileged the idea of ‘the family’ and the domestic configuration, what, then, was the position of unrelated groups, quasi-families and outsiders? While mid-Victorian literature widely praised or denigrated the reputation of the family, Stevenson’s works take a different standpoint. Throughout Stevenson’s oeuvre we encounter families which are falling apart and unrelated, family-like groups which take their place: Stevenson’s writing features clubs, clans and secret societies.

Recent Stevenson criticism associates the problematic family relations depicted in his texts with biographical details, such as the tempestuous relationship the writer had with his father. Yet this thesis offers a reassessment of the kinship relations in Stevenson’s works. It argues that Stevenson’s writing does not focus on domestic quarrels, but prioritises families which are *not* related. It asks what it means to be a member of a family which is not *familial* or a non-family group which is *like* a family. Is it possible to be both a member of a family and to be without kin? Stevenson’s works are characterised by strange and estranged family groups; it is by stepping outside of the Victorian family that characters in Stevenson’s works experience the familial.

The chapters in this thesis survey a range of social groups in Stevenson’s works, all of which take on a quasi-familial form. The first chapter considers the *fin-de-siècle* writing world and Stevenson’s own position in London’s family-like clubland relations, which both rejected and replicated the family form. The following two chapters go on to explore the role of exile and outsiders in kinship groups. Chapter 2 looks at David Balfour’s extra-familial adventures in *Kidnapped* and the clan groups he encounters. The importance of the outsider to kinship is proposed in Chapter 3, which considers island communities in Stevenson’s South Pacific writings and the role of taboo as a method of social organisation. The final two chapters consider the appropriation of familial relations by the secret society. In Chapter 4 we encounter the Otherness between the brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae* and the similar relations of inequality in the Fenian Brotherhood in *The Dynamiter*; here, fraternal relations have been adopted by the political secret society. Chapter 5 explores this relationship between family and secret society in *The Dynamiter* further: it considers the female characters in the text and the crossovers and exchanges between domestic family life and political fraternity. These familial groups are characterised by difference, Otherness and exclusion; Stevenson’s works reconsider family relations and recognise the strangeness of social groups.

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INTRODUCTION

Lighthouse Stevensons

They were only engineers, after all; they worked to order or conscience, and were only rarely disposed to flightier moments of reflection. What pride they had in their creations they put down to the advantages of forward planning and the benevolence of the Almighty. And Louis, the tricky, charming black sheep of the family, stole all the fame that posterity had to give.

Bella Bathurst, *The Lighthouse Stevensons* (2000)

Throughout his life, Robert Louis Stevenson was fascinated by group relationships: families which were not familial, but dysfunctional or falling apart, and non-family groups which were *like* families. As the only child in a Victorian family, Stevenson was, himself, a part of an unusual family configuration. His cousin, Bob Stevenson, filled the roles of both best friend and brother – Stevenson described him as ‘my *alter ego*’ (*Letters* 8: 306) and ‘the man likest and most unlike me that I have ever met’ (cited in *Letters* 1: 35). Meanwhile, longstanding friends including the lawyer, Charles Baxter, who became Stevenson’s legal and financial adviser; Walter Simpson, a member of Stevenson’s university crowd; Edmund Gosse, with whom Stevenson regularly dined at the Savile Club; William Ernest Henley, whose intense, yet mercurial, relationship with Stevenson led to mutual animosity towards the end of his life; and Sidney Colvin, ‘the perfect friend’ (‘To —’, 22), who advised Stevenson about his writing (and also married his one-time love-interest, Frances Sitwell), became a close-knit group which surrounded him from Scotland to Samoa: in his posthumously published poem ‘To S. C.’ (1895) Stevenson wrote that ‘your divided friends/Wander, estranged in body, not in mind’ (40-1). Stevenson’s works, likewise, depict strange or disintegrating family groups; clans that are more ‘family-

like' than the family form itself; societies bound by oaths; and outsiders looking in on kinship communities, apparently unattached to any themselves.

In *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), for example, we encounter the recurrent figure of 'The Child Alone';¹ the child-narrator who, almost entirely without acknowledged kin, remains wholly unconcerned by the ghostly apparitions of unnamed friends and family who appear and vanish throughout the scenes he describes:

When children are playing alone on the green,
In comes the playmate that never was seen.
When children are happy and lonely and good,
The Friend of the Children comes out of the wood. ('The Unseen Playmate', 1-4)

These mysterious, and impossible, groups emphasise the sense of seclusion and exclusion which can be found within communal activities: how can children be alone or lonely? In 'A Good Play', Tom 'fell out and hurt his knee,/So there was no one left but me' (13-14), and 'Where Go the Boats?' describes the ominous 'Other little children' who will 'bring my boats ashore' (15 and 16).² Who, exactly, these 'other' children are, and the relation of Tom, Mary Jane, Johnnie, Maria and the various other names which are introduced in the poems to our narrator, is never established.

Stevenson's later poetry continues this fixation with unrelated and fractured familial groups. 'The Tropics Vanish' (1895), written from Stevenson's self-imposed exile in the Pacific, describes his simultaneous existence in two worlds:

¹ Nine poems in *A Child's Garden of Verses* are anthologised under the heading 'The Child Alone'.

² Penny Fielding writes that: 'Despite the way he circles around familiar addressees, seeming to appeal to mutual experiences, much of Stevenson's poetry turns inwards to a close scrutiny of the individual, unshared memory. The children in *A Child's Garden of Verses* play by themselves, or with the child's own shadow which abandons him at the end of the poem, or in the company of an imaginary "Unseen Playmate". This poem opens with the strange image of even a plurality of children playing "alone": "When children are playing alone on the green". The culmination of "A Good Play" is the absence of a playmate [...]' ('Stevenson's Poetry', 110-11).

crossing boundaries of time and space, Stevenson remains physically situated in Apemama, while his mind is taken to a birds-eye view of Edinburgh, ‘Cragged, spired, and turreted, her virgin fort/Beflagged’ (6-7), and of ‘populous Fife’ (10).³ His journey is not merely topographical; Stevenson has ‘returned’ to Scotland to visit his ancestors – ‘My dead’ (13). Yet Stevenson remains a questionable member of this family group:

My dead, the ready and the strong of word.
 Their works, the salt-encrusted, still survive:
 The sea bombards their founded towers; the night
 Thrills pierced with their strong lamps. The artificers,
 One after one, here in this grated cell,
 Where the rain erases and the rust consumes,
 Fell upon lasting silence. (13-19)

While he can cross spatial distances of continents and oceans to return to his ancestral home, Stevenson remains separate from the now-silenced family which he claims as his own and the lighthouses they built which outlive them: Stevenson is not an ‘artificer’ – of lighthouses, at least. And, of course, his ancestors are in an enclosed tomb – despite his summons, he still remains physically separated from them. He both is and is not a member of this lighthouse-building ancestry: while, through consanguineous ties, they are his relations, there remains an insurmountable sense of disjuncture.⁴

Yet to identify his family, it seems, he needs this feeling of dislocation, for the poem continues:

[...]. Continents

³ The poem was written on the Isle of Apemama in October 1889 (*Letters* 6: 364).

⁴ This sense of exile and disjuncture is also present at the beginning of *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), in which the fictional editor describes his experience of returning to his home city: he ‘revisits now and again the city of which he exalts to be a native; and there are few things more strange, more painful, or more salutary, than such revisitations’ (5). Despite being a ‘native’ and feeling a sense of possession about ‘his home city’, when he arrives there he is saddened and surprised at the changes he encounters.

And continental oceans intervene;
 A sea uncharted, on a lampless isle,
 Environs and confines their wandering child:
 In vain. The voice of generations dead
 Summons me, sitting distant, to arise,
 My numerous footsteps nimbly to retrace,
 And all mutation over, stretch me down
 In that denoted city of the dead. (19-27)

From the physical distance of Samoa, Stevenson is able to recognise and be recognised by his family – he is sequestered on his island home ‘[i]n vain’ when he receives his summons – yet he also remains separate from them, in vocation, location and life. Stevenson is the ‘wandering child’ who, not unlike the children we encounter in *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, is alone amidst the friends and family who inhabit the town. These poems not only point to the strange social groups – and the strangeness of these groups – which characterise Stevenson’s writing, but they suggest that we experience the familial as something which is outside of the family.

Stevenson’s own family background is widely cited as inspiration for the problematic relationships depicted in his texts. Descended from a celebrated paternal line of lighthouse engineers, Stevenson was something of a misfit: following a childhood dominated by illness and the care of his nurse, Alison Cunningham (‘Cummy’), whom Stevenson strangely classified as ‘My second Mother, my first Wife’ (‘To Alison Cunningham’, 9), he was ill-suited to the family trade, and only permitted to pursue a literary career after studying for a law degree at Edinburgh University.⁵ In an ‘Autobiographical Note’ he wrote: ‘Born 1850 at Edinburgh. Pure Scotch blood; descended from the Scotch Lighthouse Engineers, three generations. Himself educated for the family profession [...]. But the marrow of the

⁵ For more about the ‘Lighthouse Stevensons’ see Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson; A Biography* (2005) and Bella Bathurst, *The Lighthouse Stevensons* (1999).

family was worked out, and he declined into the man of letters' (cited in Harman, 1). While recognising the 'pedigree' of his descent, Stevenson presented his own life as somehow distinct from his family line: through his own self-exclusion, he was, himself, a member of the *not*-family. An early work, *Records of a Family of Engineers* (posthumously published in 1896), excludes Stevenson from his own family in its very title.⁶ Even today, studies such as Bella Bathurst's *The Lighthouse Stevensons* (1999) perpetuate this idea of a difference between those who fall-in with the 'Lighthouse' Stevensons and those who do not (implicitly, Stevenson himself, 'the tricky, charming black sheep of the family' (xv)), as if the two are separate, unrelated groups. Yet it was only by ruling himself out of such ancestry that Stevenson was able to create and prolong this idea of the 'family profession' of 'Scotch Lighthouse Engineers'; the family only exists in this state when non-conforming members, like Stevenson, are weeded out. The 'Lighthouse Stevensons' are a construction; the term only demonstrates the flexibility of the concept of 'family' itself.

This thesis does not use Stevenson's break from his ancestors for a biographical reading of his works; instead, it offers a reassessment of the group relationships depicted within his texts. Alan Sandison proposes that Stevenson's works, like his life, are characterised by a struggle between father and child; evidence, he argues, of Stevenson's position as a modernist writer, revolting against a previous literary tradition (*Appearance of Modernism*, 15). In his study he uses examples from Stevenson's life – his attraction to older women such as Frances

⁶ Roger G. Swearingen writes that this, uncompleted, piece was 'conceived as early as 1887-88', and first published as part of the Edinburgh Edition, edited by Sidney Colvin (160). Stevenson was unsure what to call the work, suggesting *A Scottish Family*; *A Family of Engineers*; *Northern Lights*; and *The Engineers of the Northern Lights: A Family History* (*Letters* 7: 152-3). In June 1893 the text was titled: *Northern Lights: Memorials of a Family of Engineers* (Swearingen, 161).

Sitwell and Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne; family arguments about Stevenson's lack of religious devotion; and, of course, his strained relationship with his father – as biographical readings of elements of Stevenson's works. In another article Sandison writes that: 'a seminal influence on all his writing was his claustrophobic relationship with his parents' ('The Shadow of Jocasta', 31). William Veeder's essay, 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy' (1988) locates *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and its all-male communities amidst a personal struggle against the patriarchy of Thomas Stevenson, as well as an 'oedipal rage' evidenced in his relationships with his mother, Cummy and Frances Sitwell (139-40). Luisa Villa also reads Stevenson's fiction in the context of an Oedipal struggle between Thomas Stevenson and his son: her essay 'Quarrelling with the Father' (2006) discusses evidence in his fiction of difficult father-son relationships, role reversals and Stevenson's desire for 'a sibling of his own' (118). Hilary J. Beattie argues that Stevenson's relationship with his father was central to his writing life, in 'Father and Son: The Origins of Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' (2001). In *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific* (2009), Roslyn Jolly notes the similarities between Stevenson's family life and that of Loudon Dodd, hero of *The Wrecker* (1892), Stevenson's collaborative work with his step-son, Lloyd Osbourne (20). And in his study, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Literary Life* (2004), William Gray muses over the possibility that *Weir of Hermiston* (1896) was the result of an Oedipal struggle of Stevenson's own (73-4). He likens David's 'unhoused' position in *Kidnapped* (1886) to Stevenson's tenancy of Thomas Stevenson's house in Bournemouth, and the ending of *Catriona* (1893), where David steps into his lawful position in the Balfour family, to Stevenson's acquisition of his inheritance from his father (63).

Peter Keating, meanwhile, claims that: '[t]he theme of conflict between parents and children was present in Stevenson's work from the very beginning' (235); such readings have become widespread amongst Stevenson critics.

But what if Stevenson was not so concerned with the idea of 'the family' and its domestic quandaries after all? As my thesis proposes, Stevenson's works are not preoccupied with the quotidian details of family relations, but instead with the idea of *not* being related to one another, and the implications that this has for group relationships, be these exclusive clubland circles, extended Scottish clans or secret political 'brotherhoods'. Social groups in Stevenson's texts are dominated by the dilemma of exclusivity and exclusion. In order to create a club or community in the first place, someone must be excluded: the existence of the not-family and the not-related are crucial to these kinship groups from the very start. These texts depict families which are disintegrating and family-like relations which are attributed instead to groups of people who share no obvious relation. And what is more, by questioning the need for a blood or marital connection to create a familial attachment, the groups suggest no difference between the family and other social forms; while these groups are not consanguineous/conjugal families, they adopt the characteristics of family relations. Stevenson himself, of course, married the divorcee, Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne on 19 May 1880, and became 'father' to her two children, Lloyd and Belle; later he set up home in Samoa with his mother, Fanny, Lloyd, Belle and her husband Joe Strong: how does this unrelated amalgamation become considered to be a 'family'?⁷ The following chapters will consider some of the quasi-familial groups which appear in Stevenson's fiction, and

⁷ Fanny Stevenson divorced Sam Osbourne on 12 December, 1879.

the ways in which they are formed and function: Stevenson's evaluation of these groups destabilises the position of 'family' and ultimately demonstrates that kinship is not a 'natural' state. The examples in the proceeding chapters consider the different motivations behind the communal form and the increasing prominence of families of people who are not related. Rather than placing Stevenson's consideration of familial groups in a biographical framework, this thesis locates the kinship forms which appear in his works in the context of a rising sense of estrangement occurring within the family form in the late-nineteenth century.

Towards the Not-Family

This familial estrangement was also found within the term 'kinship' towards the end of the century. A person's 'kin' are primarily considered to be their '[f]amily, race, blood-relations' ('kin', *OED*). Yet this word, 'kin', is also closely related to the term 'kind', which attributes these familial relations to those of the same 'class, group, or division of things'. The word 'kind' both denotes those who share the same 'family, ancestral race, or stock from which one springs', or, more broadly, refers to those 'distinguished by attributes possessed in common' ('kind', *OED*) – as in the well-known example from *Hamlet* (1600), in which Hamlet states that Claudius is 'A little more than kin, and less than kind' (1:2). Family-like relations, therefore, can occur outside of the family, amongst those who share the same characteristics; there is ambiguity concerning exactly what is family and what is not. And this uncertainty re-surfaced in the newer term, 'kinship', in the nineteenth century: while the first citation of the term in the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates to 1786, it was in the nineteenth century that 'kinship' came to describe familial

relations occurring between groups which were not necessarily connected through blood. The two definitions under the general heading, '[t]he quality or state of being kin', read as follows:

- a) Relationship by descent; consanguinity.
- b) [...] The recognized ties of relationship, by descent, marriage, or ritual, that form the basis of social organisation. [...] [T]he system of relationships traditionally accepted in a culture and the rights and obligations which they involve. ("kinship", *OED*)

The earliest citation given for this second definition dates to 1866 and is attributed to the anthropological writing of John F. McLennan, an important figure in this transformation of family relations, whom Stevenson encountered at the Edinburgh Evening Club in the 1870s (Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 111), and whom I shall introduce shortly. Under this definition, kinship acknowledges not only the role of blood in family relationships, but also the apparently extra-familial influence of ritual in creating social groups.

And, moreover, this word, which had previously been used to denote family relations, was also extended to explicitly non-family groups in the second half of the nineteenth century, for a further, figurative, use of the term appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, attributed at its earliest to Matthew Arnold in 1876:

'Relationship in respect of qualities or character' ("kinship", *OED*). Familial relations, this suggests, were now being experienced by 'kin' who were not members of a consanguineous family: 'families' could be related through vague, shared attributes. The late-Victorian period, therefore, witnessed a revived recognition of 'families' of the same 'kind' – whose relationships to one another were not, necessarily, signified by blood. This thesis considers both forms of family relations within Stevenson's works – the problems encountered by families related by blood,

and the extension of familial relations to those who share a common attribute – and the associations and borrowings between them. In Stevenson's writing we encounter consanguineous families which are estranged and no longer familial, and 'families' related through shared qualities, beliefs or purpose; his works acknowledge the importance of unrelated groups of people to the family form.

In the social and scientific debates – and in literature – of the period, which we will consider below, there was an increasing awareness that the family might extend beyond its traditional bounds of blood and home, and that, despite being the accepted format of kinship for centuries, there might not even be such a concept as 'family' after all. Marc Shell, for example, considers the problems which the concept of kinship still poses:

The commonplace view is that consanguineous kinship is real, or literal, kinship. Anthropologists and sociologists usually lump together all other kinds as pseudo-kinship (or kinship by extension), which they then divide into subcategories such as figural, fictive, and ritual. However, the fundamental distinction between 'real' kinship and 'pseudo'-kinship—or between literal and figural structure—is the topic of a still-unresolved debate about whether kinship is essentially a matter of biology or sociology. [...] Which of the following is fundamental—the genes I share with my genitor, the love between my adoptive parent and myself, the milk I sucked from my mother, the blood I commingled with my blood brother, the wafer and wine I shared at a communal feast, or the dust from which all things (including myself) are made? (*Children of the Earth*, 3-4).

As Shell explains, there is still the tendency today to perceive blood-kin as 'real' family, despite other forms of 'sharing', which create kinship bonds. And this question of what, exactly, constitutes 'family' increasingly featured in debates in the late-nineteenth century. This sense of distance from the traditional consanguineous family form, and the acknowledgement that we can experience family-like relations outside of the family, reveals the importance of the idea of the unrelated and the

outsider to kinship. This thesis situates Stevenson's works in the midst of this concern and questions what it means to 'belong' to a family configuration.

Recent studies of the family in the nineteenth century consider both the importance that the Victorians placed on the idea of family, and the tensions within and surrounding it.⁸ Anthony S. Wohl writes that: 'There were few aspects of their society the Victorians regarded with greater reverence than the home and family life within it' (9). Yet the collection of essays of which Wohl is editor is subtitled 'Structure and Stresses', of which female agency, economic factors and incest are included. Similarly, Claudia Nelson considers the 'disjunctions between the ideal and the real [which] contributed to the many stresses and anxieties surrounding the Victorian family' (7). Her study also focuses on the problems caused by the presence of the extended family, such as the presence of servants and governesses within the home. Leonore Davidoff, Megan Dootlittle, Janet Fink and Katherine Holden consider the importance of family to Victorian life, as well as the tensions surrounding its idealised form, in *The Family Story* (1999). And, in *Family Fortunes* (1987), Davidoff and Catherine Hall note the contradictions in a family life that aspired to the goal of a 'domestic felicity' (454) which could never be achieved. They consider, for example, the differences between the ideology of middle-class family life as a haven of morality, femininity and privacy and the 'practical constraints of daily life' (450), which emerged in the need to gain public and commercial success to provide the household with an income, as well as dilemmas

⁸ Victorian descriptions of the virtue and safety of the home are widespread. Nineteenth century commentators include John Ruskin, who made the separate roles of women and men in producing and maintaining the peace of the family home clear in 'Of Queen's Gardens' (1865); Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859) 'manual' implied that, in order to ascend the social ladder or, more realistically, to improve within one's current position or occupation, the importance of family values and the family structure must not be overlooked.

experienced by men between family duty and pleasure, and the disparity between spiritual equality and social subordination which faced women (451). William Greenslade, meanwhile, links the *fin-de-siècle* to a preoccupation with family descent and origins, and to the indications from evolutionary discourse that families of great pedigree could inherit biological flaws (151-2); Sophie Gilmartin explores the ‘fictions or myths which surround pedigree’ (4) in the nineteenth century and links these to anxieties about the idea of a united nation. These studies locate the Victorian family amidst growing concerns about its morality, its members and its authenticity.

Yet while these ‘problems’ with the Victorian family have been identified, the importance of the strange figure of the familial outsider and of shadowy family-like relations, which often resulted from these anxieties, has remained largely unconsidered: what does it mean to be a stranger in one’s own family, or a family member of a configuration which is *not* a family, and why were such relations occurring towards the end of the century? In his study, *The End of Domesticity* (2010), Charles Hatten traces, what he calls, the decline of ‘familial literature’ in the late-nineteenth century:

The retreat of high literature in the late nineteenth century from celebrations of familial ideals represents a major change from mid-Victorian literature, when domestic fiction, replete with large claims for the spiritually and psychically restorative powers of families, was a culturally central and prestigious literary mode practiced by writers on both sides of the Atlantic. [...] [I]n reading Victorian familial literature’s decline, we can trace a genealogy for the alienation from domesticity that still reverberates in literary culture today. (14)

Hatten locates the increasing estrangement from the family found in ‘high literature in the late nineteenth century’ amidst a teleological movement ending in the sense of

alienation found in modernist texts.⁹ While we can certainly position Stevenson's work in the midst of this increasing sense of familial distance, the family-like groups we encounter do not tend towards absolute alienation and isolation from the family and the domestic configuration. In the late-nineteenth century we encounter the unfamiliar family and the family-like group. Members of these not-families negated the family form while remaining a part of it; they questioned the very idea of 'family'. Stevenson's texts do not depict a complete break from the family form; they recognise that 'family' is a broad construct, which can be applied to a number of kinship forms. They suggest that a sense of distance from the family is needed to retain family-like formations, and, as such, they question the possibility of ever being truly outside of a kinship group.

While the Victorian period is widely considered to have privileged the idea – and ideology – of the family, not least through the position of Victoria herself as matriarch of both a large family and empire, it was, therefore, an era shadowed by spectres of the family form. Family-like relations were used by – and attributed to – groups which were entirely unrelated, while the family form itself faced increasing threats; this extension of the family form to other social groups immediately undermines the concept of family itself, revealing it to be an imposed, constructed, social configuration. In Chapter 2, for example, we will witness David Balfour

⁹ Hatten explains that:

Whether in Virginia Woolf's searingly abrupt announcement in a subordinate clause of the death of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, James Joyce's tragically cuckolded Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, or the sterile couples of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, modernism is characterized by protagonists and writers alike profoundly alienated from romantic and family life. In stark contrast to the idealizing of domesticity found in Victorian literature, with its faith that even flawed families are the individual's best hope for fulfillment, modernism deploys a trenchant antifamilialism that depicts families as impediments to individual fulfillment, magnifies and emphasizes the flaws of families, and revels in alienation from the norms of family life. (14)

While Stevenson also displays a step away from the family, we do not encounter complete alienation from the family in his works.

commenting on the interchangeable nature of the words ‘family’ and ‘friend’ (*Kidnapped*, 42), which Naomi Tadmoo explains was a characteristic of the late-eighteenth century and suggests a concept in flux. Stevenson draws on this eighteenth century ambiguity, while also remaining very clearly situated in a late-nineteenth century context of increasingly high-profile groups of unrelated people, who formed family-like relations for pragmatic purposes. While the blood-ties of the family and emotional bonds of friendship merged linguistically in the eighteenth century, this became further evident in the nineteenth century, with the extension of specifically-familial terms to unrelated groups of people, as we have already witnessed in the changing connotations of the term ‘kinship’. Davidoff, Doolittle, Fink and Holden write that:

In the nineteenth century the armed services assumed that senior officers would act as Fathers of the Regiment, counselling, protecting but also disciplining the junior ranks regardless of age. Military nursing, which evolved from the Crimean War, followed with an expectation that while all nurses were Sisters, ladies gave orders and expected service as they would from daughters or servants. Civilian nursing, with its ambitiously familial titles of Matron and Sister, continued this tradition. (9)

Here, the security and virtue of the Victorian family is extended to distinctly unfamily-like occupations on the frontiers of battle; the organisation and respectability, as well as the camaraderie, of the domestic form are projected onto professional groups. Unrelated family ‘relations’ thus took on a political role; I will consider the role of ‘sisterhood’ in the women’s civil rights movement below, and the adoption of idealised sibling relations by secret societies in Chapters 4 and 5. Such uses challenged the validity of the family form through its very appropriation. And it was not only the horrors of modern warfare which problematised the family unit as a ‘natural’ phenomenon: the Victorian period was dominated by new anthropological,

social and political movements and theories which both threatened the family form and extended it to wider groups – it was a period in which the not-family emerged.

Like the existence of ‘Lighthouse’ Stevensons, separate from ‘other’ members of the Stevenson family, the very suggestion that there was an identifiably ‘Victorian’ family form distinct from other family groups itself indicates the concept’s mutability. As Nelson points out, despite the quasi-utopian family portrait of the mid-century:

the Victorian family was not the stable repository of absolute virtue that the literature of sentiment claimed that it was, but was changing in response to a changing world. [...] [T]he discrepancies between the ideal vision of the family and the family as it might exist in real life were giving rise to discussion so heated as to reveal deep cultural anxieties.’ (9)

There were tensions within the family throughout the nineteenth century, and this ‘model’ image of domestic life drew attention to the reality of a strained family configuration. Yet while idealised depictions of the family were collapsing from within, groups of unrelated people were also appropriating the form for their own uses. And, what is more, the integrity of the family as a blood-related group was also called into question: if this crucial aspect of family – the inherent relation between its members – was itself disputed, then what, exactly, *was* the family, and could it really be any different from other social forms?

1. The family in flux

To understand how the non-familial families function in Stevenson’s works, it is useful to consider the broader social picture which emerges when we look at the consanguineous/conjugal family in the late-nineteenth century. The role of marriage, and the gender inequality in matters such as parenting and property, received

particular criticism.¹⁰ Joan Perkin writes of an ‘anti-marriage crusade’ in the nineteenth century (315). Legislation such as the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 might give this impression: the Act extended the possibility of divorce to the middle-classes from the upper-class affair it had previously been (the working classes remained unable to afford this costly procedure, as is depicted slightly earlier in the case of Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* (1854)).¹¹ The Married Woman’s Property Act of 1870 gave women the rights to their earnings and some inherited property, and further Matrimonial Causes Acts throughout the period gave women greater rights over their possessions and their own person; the 1878 Act, for example, permitted abused wives to separate from their husbands. That legal intervention in the case of a failed marriage was now needed – and needed, in particular, to support women’s rights of ownership – thus acknowledged the possibility of a failed domestic situation and of an inattentive or abusive husband. This was an important admission: with the family often held up as a vision of innocence and safety, the need for legal assistance demonstrated not only the potential problems lurking behind this façade, but also demonstrated the family’s dependence on the law through the need for reforms.¹²

¹⁰ An article by Mona Caird, for example, in the *Westminster Review* in 1888, entitled ‘Marriage’, examined the history of marriage in order to understand its failure in the present. The article sparked a public debate, which ran throughout the year. *The Daily Telegraph* opened itself to letters on the subject; the sudden end of the furore coincided with the panic of the third Jack the Ripper murder. Presumably, following this event, a reversion to the apparent, and increasingly mythical, safety and innocence of the family seemed more appealing. See Harry Quilter (Ed.), *Is Marriage a Failure?* (1888).

¹¹ The details of this Act are found in Allen Horstman’s study, *Victorian Divorce* (1985). Horstman states that: ‘All Respectables could afford divorce, though tremendous financial sacrifices would be necessary in the lower rungs of the economic ladder’ (80).

¹² Others recognised this as well: Annie Besant argued against ‘state regulation of personal relationships save where children were concerned’ (Bland, 153) in a pamphlet written in 1878, which argued the case for free unions.

These legal changes did not only protect women's property and person in the case of a failed marriage, however, but they also protected her position as a parent. Where previously children 'belonged' solely to their father (except, conveniently, in the case of illegitimacy), the Custody of Infants Act (1839) had ruled that children were the joint 'property' of both parents. The later Guardianship of Infants Act (1886) furthered this by requiring that the welfare of the child in question should be considered, enabling separated wives to claim custody rights: parents now needed legal assistance to claim guardianship of their own children. While these examples of legal intervention into the family demonstrated that it was not, therefore, an 'organic' social model, the very recognition in courts of law that the family could break up in the first place also demonstrated its limitations.

The authority of marriage – and the integrity of the family itself – was gradually being torn apart by the implementation of, and acknowledged need for, legal protection: this was a period in which the family, as we will see in Chapter 2, was revealed not to depend upon any innate values, but on laws, legislation and practicalities. Davidoff, Doolittle, Fink and Holden explain that: '[i]n many ways the modern understanding of the family was a creation of the nineteenth century. It was those generations that so busily elevated familial relationship and cultivated the idea of Home' (101). The ideal and ideology of the Victorian family was, indeed, strongly equated with the safety and integrity of the domestic sphere and the home. But it was, in fact, in this period that the foundations of the 'broken home' were set: if a family could be constructed, it could also be deconstructed. With the extension of divorce and property laws came the existence of a new phenomenon – the not-family unit, consisting of divorced parents who, while technically unrelated and

possibly not residing in the same home, remain connected as ‘mother’ and ‘father’ to their family.

Alongside the increasing rights for women, the *fin-de-siècle* witnessed the rise of the New Woman, whom Sally Ledger describes as: ‘variously, a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet; she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women’s movement’ (1). While difficult to pin down, the New Woman, in both theory and reality, embodied the increasing options and independence available to women following the extension of their civil rights; on the other hand, she also represented a threat to the current patriarchal social order and conventions. Rhetoric surrounding the concept is unsure where to place the blame: the New Woman was variously described as licentious and asexual (Ledger, 16). Yet the most evident problem created by New Women lay with the family: while an immoral wife or mother would dispel the ‘angel in the house’ mythology, an androgynous one problematised the very notion of motherhood.¹³ Ledger explains that: ‘the repeated assertion that the New Woman rejected motherhood had a profound political significance at the *fin de siècle*: such a rejection was regarded by some not merely as a rebellious whim but as a threat to the English “race”’ (18). Through an apparent rejection of the family, in favour of a more public life of employment or education, the New Woman was also, it seems, risking the future of the nation itself.

¹³ Coventry Patmore’s poem, *The Angel in the House*, was first published in 1854, and praised by John Ruskin in *Of Queen’s Gardens* (1865), which helped to associate the term ‘angel in the house’ with oppressive patriarchal values (xviii). Meanwhile, for biological discussions about the New Woman, see Ledger (17-18); Showalter (39); Lucy Bland (54-58).

More troubling than this was the increased sexual freedom of the New Woman, which suggested that women did not need, or even desire, the family set-up after all. With the beginnings of the feminist movement came the principle of 'sisterhood' as a political concept; a universal, women-only, unrelated 'family' of sisters. Ann Heilmann writes: 'Ambiguous, unstable and often problematical, female friendship and political sisterhood nonetheless constitute an important counter-plot to marriage' (98). Rather than relying on patriarchal authority, women now explicitly looked towards other women for support. The quasi-family of 'sisterhood' did not only carry a political purpose, such as the professionalisation of women, as we saw above in women's nursing careers, but also pointed towards the self-dependency of women and even the idea of sexual relations between women. 'There was a broadening awareness of lesbianism amongst closely knit intellectuals from the 1880s' (126), writes Ledger: writers such as George Eliot, Amy Levy and Jane Carlyle, for example, are known to have had 'passionate friendships' (126) with female acquaintances.¹⁴ Sisterhood was a rejection of the family form as both a heterosexual and a patriarchal construct.

Similar question marks lurked over all-male groups: in Chapter 4 I will consider the concept of unrelated 'Brotherhood' and the rise of the political secret society, but male homosocial spaces also operated in clubland and writers' groups, as we will see in Chapter 1. While studies such as Oliver S. Buckton's *Cruising With Robert Louis Stevenson* (2007), Wayne Koestenbaum's *Double Talk: The erotics of male literary collaboration* (1989), William Veeder's essay, 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy' (1988) and Elaine Showalter's chapter on 'Dr. Jekyll's

¹⁴ For more on Victorian lesbian identities, see Ledger (122-149) and Heilmann (77-154).

Closet' in *Sexual Anarchy* (1990) locate Stevenson amidst rumours of homosexuality – evidenced, apparently, by his use of words such as 'cruise' and 'queer' (Buckton, 7; Koestenbaum, 147-51), his literary collaborations and his depictions of patriarchal failure and oedipal desire (Veeder) – my thesis will not consider the homoerotics of club life. Yet male homosexuality was another factor in the importance of the unrelated: homosexuals were receiving high-profile attention – as a taboo, excluded group. Showalter writes that:

In January, just as Stevenson published his novel [*Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*], the Labouchère Amendment criminalizing homosexual acts went into effect, and Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* offered some of the first case studies of homosexual men. [...] For most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double life, in which a respectable daytime world often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism. Indeed, the *fin de siècle* was the golden age of literary and sexual doubles. (106)¹⁵

Later, the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889-90 and the spectacle of the Wilde trials of 1895 escalated public interest in the marginalised group.¹⁶ Homosexuality was criminalised, Othered and tabooed: it was deemed to exist only in opposition to the family – in the form of a 'double'. There were, therefore, explicit limits to society, and groups of people who were consciously excluded. Yet the amendments which made homosexuality illegal had still conceded the existence of such relations: this acknowledgement of the excluded conversely demonstrates the need for such groups, against which 'normal' society can identify and validate itself. The

¹⁵ Richard Dellamora writes that: 'Passage of the Labouchère amendment, a piece of legislation so broad in scope as to make illegal virtually all male homosexual activity or speech whether in public or private, marked a decisive turn for the worse in the legal situation of men in Britain who engaged in sexual activities with other men. [...] The Labouchère amendment or something like it was essential to the increasing deployment of homophobia as a mechanism of social control that occurred after 1885' (200). Dellamora also notes that the term used at this time was 'sodomy' or 'sodomite' (or 'sodomite', as Oscar Wilde was famously charged as (195)); 'homosexuality' began to be used as the emphasis shifted from sexual acts between men to 'sexual sentiment or thought' (200).

¹⁶ The Cleveland Street scandal involved a fifteen year old messenger boy, who had been 'selling sexual services to gentlemen in a house at 19 Cleveland Street'; the gentlemen implicated were aristocrats and even Prince Albert Victor (Dellamora, 206-7).

acknowledgement that homosexuality even existed thus challenged both the idea of a heterosexual, innate family and the notion of a discrete social form: social groups, in fact, depended upon the idea of the outsider for their very existence.

The increasing concern during this period about the family interloper, meanwhile, positions the outsider as a threat to the family form: the criminal; the family member who is not who (s)he seems; the spy; even the seemingly positive influences of the detective and the police force. With the validity of the family structure under threat, it is unsurprising that the previously impenetrable institution, and the ideal of security and honesty which it represented, now became an object of suspicion, and less positive images of the domestic scene came to light. While marriage and the roles of men and women within the family were under question, another important family ideal – privacy and the home – was also facing criticism. The domestic fallacy of the integrity of the home was questioned by the sensation novels of the 1860s and the detective genre towards the end of the century.

Sensation plots involve a crime or scandal committed in a middle- or upper-class domestic setting: *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) presents a bigamist at the heart of an aristocratic English family; *The Moonstone* (1868) is based on a theft within an English household; *The Woman in White* (1859-60) places a foreign spy in the midst of an apparently respectable English family and documents the ensuing kidnap, insanity and murder of its various characters; *East Lynne* (1861) trumps both by telling the story of the neglected wife and mother, Lady Isabel Carlyle, who runs away with another man; he then deserts her and her illegitimate child. With her former husband remarried, she returns to her original family home as governess to her own children: through a succession of scandals the family itself becomes an

extended, quasi-family. Sensation plots often reveal members of families to be unrelated, bigamously married or illegitimately parented (as, for example, in Wilkie Collins's *No Name* (1862)): the texts present groups which are masquerading as the family form. Anthea Trodd argues that: 'In the age when the home was celebrated as never before, the use of plots of domestic crime allowed a discussion to take place which opposed at many points the dominant ideology of the sanctity of the home' (5): the rise of the sensation and detective novels was indicative of the concerns about the family which existed in the real world. This new focus on domestic crime drew in the Metropolitan Police force, which had only recently been established in 1829, to permeate the private and public spheres, transgressing the previous inviolability of domestic life. Secrecy and crime were now acknowledged to be a part of family life, and the sheltered existence that the family had led was now blurred with public intrusion and investigations – the family became public property.¹⁷

Amidst these shady threats was the secret society: Fosco, of course, works for 'The Brotherhood'; presumably a spin-off of the Carbonari, a not-so-secret society which appeared regularly in the British press during the revolutions on the Continent. The relationship between the secret society and the family was a further transgression of public-private boundaries. As an exclusive – and thus excluding – group, the secret society is yet another example of a social form that relies on the idea of the outsider (typically, the State) against which it can define itself. And equally, the secret society itself is depicted as an excluded threat against which the

¹⁷ For example, see Trodd, *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* (1989), Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community* (1984) and Phillip Thurmond Smith, *Policing Victorian London* (1985).

State can validate *its* authority – social form inevitably becomes a ceaseless battle of definition; of who or what is outside of which group. Literature of the latter-half of the nineteenth century is rife with the threat of such groups: as we will see, they feature regularly in the works of Stevenson, and other writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Henry James and Wilkie Collins deploy them in their texts: ‘The Six Napoleons’ (1904), for example, concerns a group of Italians who are believed to be Mafia agents; *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) deals with an anarchist group in London; *The Woman in White* (1859-60) depicts a Carbonari group, ‘The Brotherhood’, infiltrating British upper-class domestic life. Yet while these texts display a fear of revolutionary activity and secrecy, they also reveal an extended, politicised form of the family itself – these groups are political ‘Brotherhoods’. The implications of this are discussed in Chapter 4; yet, like the familial army roles I cited above, the fact that an unrelated version of family relations was slipping into the public sphere demonstrates problems with the concept of ‘natural’ family ties: ‘the unrelated’ took shape and found a political voice through the mechanics of private, family relations.

Karen Chase and Michael Levenson argue that public interest in the concept of the Victorian family fuelled both its elevation and collapse. The idea of the family became surrounded by rhetoric – ‘the spectacle of intimacy’: ‘it was scarcely possible to see the home beneath the mottoes enshrining it’ (215). A fascination both with upholding the respectability of the family and with predicting its sensational downfall took over from its perceived privacy. Yet by doing so, this public gaze also took in the idea of the excluded and the unrelated: the existence of the New Woman and homosexuality, sensational family crimes and divorce proceedings. The changes

occurring to the family form, and to groups surrounding it, revealed it to be an unnatural, constructed form, both wary of and dependent upon the law and the outsider. While being a period of domestic ideals, the Victorian period – and the Victorian family – also exposed the idea of the unrelated and its political and social resonances.

2. Victorian anthropology

The increasing awareness of past human and social forms which followed the evolutionary discourse of the mid-nineteenth century, and the consequent ‘discovery’ of anthropological secrets, permeated both science and literature: the rise of anthropological studies was not confined to the realms of science, and fiction writers and essayists such as Stevenson, Andrew Lang and Grant Allen also debated and wrote about this area of social studies.¹⁸ The Anthropological Society of London was founded in 1863, when it achieved independence from broader social studies disciplines after splitting off from the Ethnological Society of London, and studies of ‘primitive’ social forms found their way into journals ranging from *Science* to *Fortnightly Review*.¹⁹ While it emerged as a distinct academic discipline, it also remained a topic of public interest, and anthropology became a high-profile source of debate in the second half of the nineteenth century: not only had the creation of empire opened doors on cultures previously unseen and incited widespread curiosity,

¹⁸ Stevenson wrote an anthropological study, *In the South Seas* (1896), during his travels, and scholarly research is increasingly looking at the role of anthropology in his later works; Julia Reid has also traced evolutionary discourse in his earlier works (see *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle* (2006), and ‘Stevenson, Romance, and Evolutionary Psychology’ (2006)). Lang, anthropologist, folklorist, mythologist and man of letters, wrote a number of anthropological studies in the latter-half of the nineteenth century, and corresponded with Stevenson about his friend’s findings in the Pacific. Allen, a friend to both, was an adventure fiction writer-turned-anthropologist.

¹⁹ ‘Primitive Marriage’, by ‘H. W. H.’, was published in *Science* in 1886, and McLennan’s *The Worship of Animals and Plants* was published in *Fortnightly Review* in 1869.

but evolutionist discourse enabled certain anthropologists to argue that these ‘secret’ societies had remained frozen in a ‘primitive’ state, which current ‘civilised’ society had once passed through in ancient times. Edward B. Tylor, for example, argued that newly-discovered societies were ‘survivals’ of primeval times, and thus closer to the ‘origin’ of mankind, as I will consider further in Chapter 3.²⁰ Studies of previous social forms thus began to serve as explanations for the present state of civilisation.

Yet these studies did not uncover social origins which validated the concept of ‘family’ as an innate form; in fact, they suggested that the ‘natural’ state of family relations was that they were not, after all, related. In 1865, McLennan, whom Stevenson encountered in Edinburgh, wrote *Primitive Marriage*, which made the groundbreaking claim that the early family form existed through a system which he called ‘exogamy’: it ‘*prohibited marriage within the tribe*’ (23). There was, he claimed, a distinct reasoning behind this seemingly licentious custom: ‘such a system could not have sprung out of the mere instinctive desire of savages to possess objects cherished by a foreign tribe; it must have had a deeper source—to be sought for in their circumstances, their ideas of kinship, their tribal arrangements’ (20). Because of a perceived lack of women, and out of fear of incest, tribes began to look to neighbouring groups and a system of ‘marriage by capture’ took place, thus placing women at the heart of, what was previously considered to be, a patriarchal system (11-32). The implicit promiscuity of wives, due to the shortage of women, which this exogamous system suggests, resulted in a matriarchal kinship system through which relations were derived from women rather than men; men being uncertain of

²⁰ Tylor argued that the behaviour of social groups in other countries, whom civilisation had apparently passed by, could explain the origins of our own, indicatively civilised, society. Intended to indicate the progress of civilisation, this anthropological theory, which was based on the ‘principles of survival’ (1:15), conversely also drew attention to the proximity of Victorian society to ‘savagery’.

their paternity. The dual suggestion that ‘family’ came from *outside of* the group – a concept which I will consider in terms of taboo and the importance of the outsider in kinship relations in Chapter 3 – and that the promiscuity of women was central to the family group, challenged the key proponents of the enclosed, domestic, patriarchal Victorian family and led to discussion in anthropological volumes and science journals: for example, H. W. H. published an article entitled ‘Primitive Marriage’ in *Science* in 1886. Yet investigations into the family form went further still: McLennan identified this exogamous system to be an inheritance from the more ancient social system of ‘totemism’, which he explained in a series of articles entitled, ‘The Worship of Plants and Animals’, published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869 and 1870.

Totem groups were considered to be the most primitive, authentic family form; yet these groups bonded through their mutual belief in their relation to a totemic object and were not necessarily related by blood. The groups were not naturally related, but, crucially, formed around a *belief* that they were: the ‘original’ family form, as these Victorian anthropologists believed it to be, was, in fact, entirely unrelated. McLennan’s studies focused on the use of the totem in Australia and America: he explained that: ‘[t]he word has come into use from its being the name given by certain tribes of American Indians to the animal or plant which, from time immemorial, each of the tribes has had as its sacred or consecrated animal or plant’ (‘Worship of Plants and Animals’, 408). Members of a totem group see themselves ‘as being of *the breed* of the Totem’ (417), he argued: a person in a totemic tribe was related to the plant, animal or object that the group had chosen, or inherited, as its

totem. McLennan's literary example of such a system is found in American adventure fiction: *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), he explained, depicts:

Magua, a Fox, with a party of warriors, comprising a Beaver, happening to pass a colony of real beavers, the Beaver refused to pass without addressing his kinsfolk. 'There would have been a species of profanity in the omission,' says Mr. Cooper, 'had this man passed so powerful a community of his fancied kinsmen without bestowing some evidence of regard. Accordingly, he paused and spoke in words as kind and friendly as if he were addressing more intelligent beings. He called the animals *his cousins* [...].' (417)

While demonstrating the importance of early adventure fiction to anthropological 'fact', McLennan's point about these problematic family relations with animals is also important. The human Beaver must acknowledge the real, animal beavers, due to his belief that the two are related: the animals are 'cousins', a vague term for relatives at this time.²¹ By claiming kinship with animals, the Beaver is acting under the belief that the two have a familial relation.

Stevenson's friend, Andrew Lang, was one of many to pick up this new idea of kinship. In 1884, in a chapter entitled 'The Early History of the Family', he defined totemism somewhat more lucidly as:

the name for the custom by which a stock [...] claims descent from and kindred with some plant, animal, or other natural object. This object, of which the effigy is sometimes worn as a badge or crest, members of the stock refuse to eat. As a general rule, marriage is prohibited between members of the stock [...] who claim descent from the same object and wear the same badge. (*Custom and Myth*, 260)²²

²¹ The *OED* cites references to 'cousin' in this period meaning both relative *and* friend, or 'kinsman'; this is also the role which Bob Stevenson took in Stevenson's life.

²² It is likely that Stevenson would have read *Custom and Myth*; he was, at least, aware of its existence. Lang, for example, wrote to Stevenson that: 'I have shelved Custom & Myth, perhaps I told you – it ran into non-solid and truly learned book reading season, and seemed more appropriate to autumn' (Demoor, 68). When Stevenson moved to Samoa, he and Lang corresponded about matters of anthropology: in one letter Stevenson wrote, 'Also send me any inquiries you wish made. I am not only a resident myself in the South Seas, I have hands, friends and correspondents almost all over. Shape your queries, and 'tis hard if I cannot get the answer' (*Letters* 6: 417).

Lang approached the totem as a formation which relies on the apparent relationship between the totem animal and its members to maintain the group's kinship bonds. While an individual is apparently descended from its totem, a totem group is not necessarily related by blood, and certainly does not organise or believe itself as such: instead, it forms its group relations through the central, totemic figure. In these groups, kinship bonds are formed by supposed relations to the same totem: totemic groups thus form through mutual relations to the totem itself and not through consanguineous/conjugal ties. As a group in which relations are formed through the central totemic figure, and not through direct blood-ties to other individuals, the late-nineteenth century perceptions of the totem highlight the blurred boundaries between the individual, family and friendship, and the problems that this presents for the purpose and form of the family: as Lang acknowledged, '[t]hese ideas and customs are not the ideas natural to men organised in the patriarchal family' (263).

The use of the totem as a 'badge', which Lang mentioned, signifies an individual's 'allegiance' to its totem, representing their common 'stock'.²³ McLennan saw the use of the totem badge as the single surviving instance of 'primitive' organisation in the modern world: 'our heraldic bearings are traces of the Totem stage lingering in civilised nations' ('The Worship of Animals and Plants: Part 1', 418). The totem badge is the equivalent of the contemporary coats of arms,

²³ McLennan cites George Grey, author of *Grey's Travels* (Grey appears to have written a number of Australian anthropological works in the mid-nineteenth century), claiming that:

Grey tells us that the Australians use the Totem as the family crest or ensign, and expresses the opinion that our heraldic bearings are traces of the Totem stage lingering in civilised nations. It is well known that the Totem was also used as an ensign by the American Indians, who tattooed the figure of it on their bodies, and, not content with this, painted and dressed themselves so as to resemble it. Every reader of stories about these Indians must be familiar with the fact. Magua, for example, in the beaver scene, from the account of which we have just quoted, wore 'his ancient garb, bearing the outline of a fox on the dressed skin which formed his robe;' while the Beaver chief 'carried the beaver as his peculiar symbol.' (418)

for example, which not only indicate lengthy lineages, but frequently refer to the upper classes. This recognition that totemic organisation remained, not just in supposedly ‘savage’ countries, but also in ‘civilised’ Victorian society is an important admission for this thesis, which considers the demise of blood-kin and the role of unrelated familial groups in texts such as *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), in which the Duries are, instead, strangely reliant on their shattered coat of arms, and *The Dynamiter* (1885), in which the secretive Mormon group depend on the emblem of the ‘Open Eye’. Totem symbols were even invented by writers, through which they could be identified: a light-hearted article by Stephen Hallett in *Strand Magazine* entitled ‘Totems for Famous Authors’ (1906) mused over the form which well-known authors’ totems should take. Social groups such as the family, and even professional groups such as authors, still organised themselves around ‘savage’ emblems and rituals.

But why these early social forms existed in the first place remained a key anthropological problem: how do people become related to or descended from an animal or a plant? In his later studies, *Social Origins and Primal Law* (1903) and *The Secret of the Totem* (1905), Lang identified a forgotten origin – an indecipherable, linguistic secret – at the heart of ‘primitive’ totemic organisation, which was, therefore, also central to the modern family and to modern civilisation itself. Approaching the totem as a crypto-linguistic formation, Lang suggested that the origin of the group names which ‘suggested a relation between the various name-giving objects and the groups which bore them’ had been ‘forgotten’ (*The Secret of the Totem*, vii-viii). To make up for this loss of the initial link between totem and group, totemic groups invented their own myths of origin: the concept of kinship

relations is built on a fundamental lack. 'The names [of the totems],' Lang contended:

once accepted and stereotyped, implied a connection between each kindred, and the animal, plant, or other thing in nature whose name the kindred bore. Round the mystery of this connection the savage mind would play freely, and would invent the explanatory myths of descent from, and kinship with, or other friendly relations with, the name-giving objects. (*Social Origins*, 161)

To Lang, totemic kinship was created by a linguistic link, which cemented the group bonds: the loss of this link gives the group little reason to exist, having no blood-relationships that might otherwise serve to unite the group. Without these 'explanatory myths', there remains a rupture between the totem and its kin; the unifying figure of the totem loses its authority and, ultimately, its meaning. The 'authentic', 'primitive' totem family group is itself an artificial structure, existing out of the necessity – be this psychological or practical – for group organisation, not an innate relationship to the totem or to each other. The 'natural' state of the family was, therefore, that it was not natural after all, but instead the product of a pragmatic decision which was dependent on myths of origin, exclusivity (and exclusion) and outsiders.

Dread changelings

The late-Victorian family, therefore, was something of a hollow institution. With the need for legal backing, and with ongoing threats from extra-familial groups, such as the New Woman and tabooed groups of the populace, as well as the possibility of dark secrets in the cosy home and the revelation that 'authentic', ancient family groups were entirely unrelated after all, the validity of this social form was under question: the concept of the unfamilial family was increasingly present. And what is

more, these threats demonstrated the growing importance of the unrelated, the outsider, the extra-familial. That the term ‘totem’ had entered the common lexicon by the turn of the century, for example, is telling: the word appears in the fiction and poetry of Rudyard Kipling.²⁴ Sigmund Freud’s study, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), meanwhile, explored social groupings as psychological phenomena, existing out of a perceived need and fear rather than an innate cause. John Buchan later used the term ‘totem’ to represent the gentlemen with whom Richard Hannay associates: the kinship system is openly used at the apparent other end of the anthropological spectrum as a reference to super-civilised ‘clubland’-style kinship, as I will consider in Chapter 1.²⁵ Does this make Hannay’s all-male friendship ‘totem’ group akin to family? Meanwhile, common family relationships such as ‘sister’ and ‘brother’, as we have seen, were increasingly to be found in extra-familial contexts such as the hospital, clubs or societies: ‘sister’ is first referenced in a nursing context by the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1860 (“sister”, *OED*). And the recognition that marginalised groups such as homosexuals existed at all (ironically, through the very act of ‘tabooing’ them and making such relations illegal) acknowledged the role of the outsider in the formation of social groups.

It is this appearance of and need for the idea of the unrelated and the family-like which my thesis addresses. These unfamiliar models of kinship were appearing

²⁴ In *Kim* (1901), for example, the term is used for a religious emblem:

The Sahibs prayed to their God; for in the centre of the mess-table—its sole ornament when they were on the line of march—stood a golden bull fashioned from old-time loot of the Summer Palace at Pekin—a red-gold bull with lowered head, ramping upon a field of Irish green. [...] Kim, with slightly raised head, was still staring at his totem on the table, when the chaplain stepped on his right shoulder-blade. (83-4)

See also Kipling’s Masonic poem, ‘The Totem’ (1932), which describes the narrator’s induction into the Freemasons, and the ‘totem’ which he thereafter wears on his breast (15).

²⁵ See *Greenmantle* (1916): ‘Gaudian was clearly a good fellow [...] [H]e belonged to my own totem’ (67). Buchan is also aware of the origin of the term, using ‘totem’ in its anthropological context in *Prester John* (1910), in which ‘[t]he snake was [the tribe’s] totem’ (72).

in Victorian society in a variety of forms, and Stevenson's reflections on these groups become a part of this discourse about 'families' which existed outside of the archetypal Victorian family. The depictions of clubs, clans and clandestine groups in his writings present a reconsideration of the role of the Victorian family and comment on the increasingly distanced and fragmented state of familial relations. Over the following chapters, I will consider the not-families of the club, the clan, the outsider and the secret society, and their borrowings from and exchanges with the family form.

The first chapter considers the literary environment in which Stevenson was writing. Clubs, coteries and communities had become increasingly important to the literary world, as they provided useful networks of writers, publishers and reviewers. And the communities which these writers occupied drew upon aspects of familial relations: they both borrowed from the domestic setting of the household and rejected its feminising elements to create a home away from the home. To counteract this potential domesticity, they also appropriated the masculine rhetoric of the 'primitive' family and the tribe. Described by Lang as his 'Tribe', for example, Stevenson's quasi-family of friends and followers was crucial to his literary (and commercial) success. This chapter considers these two quasi-familial aspects of clubland, as well as the rural artists' colonies which were also important places of both domestic and 'primitive' family-like kinship to writers and painters in the 1870s and 1880s in particular: from London's clubland, the chapter also follows Stevenson to the artists' colony at Barbizon. Stevenson was in the midst of a colonisation of family-like relations for pragmatic purposes; writing now required membership of an

exclusive, male, homosocial literary kinship, in which participants could associate with others of their 'kind'.

With the society in which Stevenson was writing itself presenting newly unfamiliar models, the remaining chapters consider specific examples of these groups in Stevenson's works as comments on the alienation happening within the family form in the second half of the nineteenth century. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the role of exile and unrelated groups. Chapter 2 considers the demise of the consanguineous, inherited family form and the role of clan groups in *Kidnapped* (1886). This chapter is rooted in the context of the increased scientific interest in Scottish clan groups in the nineteenth century, and in social science and anthropological studies. David Balfour's adventure is not an attempt to reinstate the hero within a recognisable family form and with a father-figure, but a study which assesses the importance of *not* being related to one another. Balfour's family is reliant on property, and property laws, rather than any innate sense of belonging; David, who has been unlawfully disinherited, needs legal recognition to prove his position as a family member. The family, therefore, is not a 'natural' formation. Yet the clans which David encounters operate around a different system of loyalty, and remain a family group while being, potentially, entirely unrelated: the chapter considers the concept of the clan alongside McLennan's and J. G. Frazer's anthropological idea of the unrelated 'totem clan', as an example of a group which is more family-like than the family itself.

From the totem, we move on to taboo and the idea of the excluded as a form of social organisation, which is important throughout this thesis: Chapter 3 explores the crucial role of the outsider to the formation of a group, using examples from

communities depicted in Stevenson's South Pacific works. Here, I consider familial relations in their most distant form, as a kinship community formed through a common culture and laws. This chapter considers the social need for 'the unrelated', the excluded, or the not-family: in order to create a group of any kind, someone has to be left out; this is a condition of forming a society or club. The outsider – be this the onlooker, such as the anthropologist, or the deliberately excluded or tabooed – is central to the concept kinship itself. Here, we will consider the role of taboo, as perceived by Victorian anthropological studies in South Pacific communities and in British Victorian society itself. Stevenson's own anthropological writings, as well as 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892), demonstrate how the outsider creates and enforces kinship boundaries. And there was a further 'taboo' which stood-out in the Pacific islands in the nineteenth century: Molokai, the leper colony. While this island-prison was a visual example of how excluded groups can validate 'normal' society, Stevenson's writings about it acknowledge the relativity of being excluded: on his trip to Molokai, Stevenson found himself in the position of outsider, distanced from the leper community. Chapter 3, therefore, ultimately demonstrates the problematic, and entirely interdependent, need for communities to find somebody against whom to define themselves.

The final two chapters consider the role of political families and secret societies, which were a regular feature in Stevenson's works in the 1880s and widely perceived to be a threat to British social and political stability. Chapter 4 looks at the idea of 'brotherhood' and its movement from a consanguineous relationship to an exclusive political formation. In *The Master of Ballantrae* we witness the fall of the House of Durrisdeer, a titled family who are dependent on their lineage and their past

as a form of self-definition. However, as we will see, the group is not, in fact, bound by their blood connection, but by objects such as their family crest. The chapter then considers the Durie brothers, whose feud seals the fate of the family, in light of Derrida's analysis of brothers as examples of the absolute friend – and thus the absolute enemy – and Penny Fielding's Derridean reading of *The Master of Ballantrae*. There is, as this chapter suggests, nothing natural about brotherhood apart from this sense of enmity: fraternal relations are self-destructive and dependent on Otherness and distance. While brotherhood in *The Master of Ballantrae* is shown in fact to be a political connection, the chapter then moves on to consider the similar exclusivity and exclusion of secret societies and political Brotherhoods abounding both in this period and in Stevenson's texts, and, in particular, his depiction of the Fenian Brotherhood in *More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter* (1885). Political Brotherhood is an explicitly-constructed group form, which adopts the rhetoric of 'brotherhood' to suggest notions of equality. Yet, in fact, it is an exclusive and excluding configuration, which is reliant on oaths, ritual and secrecy to bind its unrelated members: the group creates an artificial familial relationship through the 'rebirth' of members at the initiation ceremony. This chapter considers the problems with consanguineous ties, the natural distance evoked by (br)otherness and the difficulties faced by such 'democratic' fraternal relations.

And, finally, Chapter 5 explores the odd families in *The Dynamiter*. This is perhaps the most unusual text yet in its representation of family-like groups, and particularly strange for a text in Stevenson's oeuvre as this is a novel which is dominated by female characters. In this chapter, I consider the overlap and exchanges taking place between family and secret society. The ways in which the

chapter will address these are threefold: the first section looks at the non-familial families which are present throughout the text. It looks at the role of the female characters, all of whom experience some form of family disjuncture: orphaned, disinherited, even both. I will then go on to consider the appropriation of the domestic sphere by the world of secret societies: in *The Dynamiter* we encounter a Victorian family home which is used to house a political brotherhood. In the final part of the chapter, our focus will move to Fanny van de Grift Stevenson's tale of Mormon danger and destruction, 'The Story of the Destroying Angel'. This story forms a part of a growing genre of anti-Mormon literature in the late-nineteenth century, much of which was concerned about the threat to the family from the Latter-day Saints' policy of polygamy. Yet it is the Mormons' representation in this text as a secret society which is of particular interest to this chapter. Members of the Latter-day Saints were actively encouraged to leave family and friends behind to up-sticks and join the Mormon 'Gathering'. Here, we witness fragmented family groups which choose to be initiated into a secret brotherhood – a family-like group. Having already witnessed the importance of both the unfamiliar and the quasi-familial, therefore, at the end of my thesis we find ourselves considering the existence of families which are not familial taking on the role of the non-family which is *like* a family. But this does not quite bring us full-circle: instead, it points towards the social need for such dislocation: the family, it seems, needs to be lifted out of itself in order to become a familial group.

Like Victorian discourse surrounding the apparitions of the family form, Stevenson's works are preoccupied with families which somehow fracture and are not related, and with unrelated groups which take on aspects of family relations.

This is nowhere more evident than in the nightmarish, posthumously published poem, ‘The Last Sight’ (1895), in which Stevenson describes an encounter with his long-dead father.

Once more I saw him. In the lofty room,
Where oft with lights and company his tongue
Was trump to honest laughter, sate attired
A something in his likeness. – ‘Look!’ said one,
Unkindly kind, ‘look up, it is your boy!’
And the dread changeling gazed on me in vain.

Thomas Stevenson does not recognise his son; he has become a ‘dread changeling’. ‘Changeling’ is an odd choice of word: not only used since the sixteenth century to describe an inconsistent person, the term also describes a person exchanged for another; even ‘a child secretly substituted for another at infancy’ by fairies (“changeling”, *OED*). As Shell writes, ‘changelings indicate the indeterminability of biological parenthood; they suggest its fictional aspects’ (*The End of Kinship*, 4). Stevenson’s ‘father’ both is, and is not, his father (and nor is he his mother’s son).²⁶ Stevenson remains his ‘boy’, yet they are not-related members of the same family; his father has transformed into ‘[a] something’ – a ghostly double – which is dressed ‘in his likeness’. And, what is more, Stevenson takes the position of a bystander, looking in on an (un)familiar scene: he is, as we saw above in the case of the ‘Lighthouse’ Stevensons, an outsider in his own family. This increasing strangeness of the social configuration, and yet also the need for the unfamiliar and the outsider in order to validate social groups *as* groups, is the focus of the following chapters.

²⁶ Stevenson also refers to his father as a changeling in a letter to Colvin: ‘If we could have had my father, that would have been a different thing. But to keep that changeling – suffering changeling, any longer, could better none and nothing’ (*Letters* 5: 411).

WRITING COMMUNITIES

1. Coteries and Clubland: 'The Tribe of Louis'

THE Club, in the general acceptation of the term, may be regarded as one of the earliest offshoots of Man's habitually gregarious and social inclination; and as an instance of that remarkable influence which, in an early stage of society, the powers of Nature exercise over the fortunes of mankind. It may not be traceable to the time

When Adam dolve, and Eve span;
but, it is natural to imagine that concurrent with the force of numbers must have increased the tendency of men to associate for some common object.

John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London* (1872)

Across Stevenson's oeuvre we encounter strange and estranged family groups, families which are falling apart and quasi-family groups, which take on aspects of the family form; as this thesis suggests, Stevenson's work experiments with kinship forms to consider the position of outsiders, exclusion and unrelated groups of people. But before this thesis considers examples of these in his works, it will first look to the literary environment in which Stevenson was writing. The focus of this chapter is on the writing communities in London's clubland, of which Stevenson was an active part, and their borrowings from the family form: the society in which Stevenson was writing provided examples of the unfamilial models which his works then go on to consider. With the club adopting features of the family configuration, its members became a form of extended family of writers, reviewers and publishers, all of whom gathered together in the same 'home'. The contacts and kinship found in clubs at the *fin-de-siècle* were important to a writer's success, for it was here that writers could meet with like-minded individuals and perhaps make useful business contacts. And this function of the club as a place to meet similar people also rendered it a familial form: this chapter considers how the club provided a place for a

writer to associate with those of a similar *kind* to himself, providing a place not only of contacts, but of kinship. As a social structure which both rejected and mimicked the family form, the club offered a quasi-familial kinship to those who shared common attributes or sensibilities. And within clubs themselves, tight-knit coteries and cliques formed around influential figures of the community – one of whom was Stevenson.

Clubs and coteries became an important part of the writing world at the *fin-de-siècle*: in this period, writers grouped together in exclusive gentlemen's clubs and in unofficial coteries to gain optimum publishing potential in an increasingly flooded market. Stevenson inevitably became a part of these groups and had to take a pragmatic approach to his work: creating art now involved congregating not around 'the savage camp-fire' ('Humble Remonstrance', 85), but in a similar manner around a clique of fellow writers, editors, publishers and agents in an upmarket city location. With the increasing forms of literature available, writers turned to the assistance of publishers and fellow-authors to help to spread and promote their work. Peter Keating and John Gross, in *The Haunted Study* (1989) and *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (1969) respectively, consider the 1880s to be the beginning of a period of literary coteries and groups (Keating, 9-87; Gross, 145-181), prompting groupings of writers, reviewers and publishers. Keating explains that Stevenson, for example, 'surrounded himself with a bewildering array of helpers and consultants, which included friends, relatives, and several experienced men of letters' (68).

Literary coteries were one consequence of changes in publishing forms and the rise of reviewers. Keating explains that the variety of printing opportunities towards the end of the nineteenth century led to the wide availability of all genres of

writing in a range of forms and prices, enabling writers increasingly to move between the most profitable types of fiction:

Like most other aspects of British life at the turn of the century, fiction began to splinter into a variety of different forms which were often mutually, and culturally, incompatible, at least according to earlier systems of categorisation [...]. The proliferation of magazines, newspapers and periodicals, directed at very clearly defined groups of readers, encouraged novelists either to specialise in one particular kind of fiction, or, if the writer was exceptionally talented (or facile) to move between different kinds, thus profiting from (or taking advantage of) several sectors of the fragmenting market. (340)

The availability and proliferation of different forms of writing led to a flooded market of widely-accessible literature, and Stevenson himself became a key example of how a writer could deal with this. Over the course of his writing life, Stevenson aligned himself with a wide range of genres, including romance, realism, gothic, essays, children's writing and travel writing, which underscores the provisional nature of the construct 'genre' itself and the new ability of authors to experiment and discover which literary form could bring them optimum success and revenue. Writing became an increasingly commercialised venture of shorter stories, greater choice and quick-turnarounds of new material, and writers needed to position themselves correctly to take advantage of this.

This growing variety and number of publications highlighted the role of the reviewer as increasingly important to direct the public to the latest and best offerings from the literary world: Stevenson made a reference to the writer-as-prostitute and, in this context, the nineteenth-century reviewer was ever more employed to peddle the writer's wares.¹ Glenda Norquay explains the changing role of the critic from casual

¹ Stevenson wrote that: 'We are whores, some of us pretty whores, some of us not, but all whores: whores of the mind, selling to the public the amusements of our fireside as the whore sells the pleasures of her bed' (*Letters* 5: 171).

reviewer to mass educator with an ability to form opinion in the late-nineteenth century:

The role of the critic was in a state of transition over the period of Stevenson's writing career [...]. In the 1870s literary debate was conducted through the vast numbers of reviews and articles in widely read periodicals and newspapers, in collections of essays and in histories of literature, generally produced with some assumption of a homogeneous readership. By the beginnings of the twentieth century, increased consciousness of a new mass readership, divisive debates over the form and function of fiction, and an emphasis on scholarship [...] had combined to change the nature of literary criticism considerably. [...] [A] sea change clearly does take place between the 1880s and the early twentieth century. (54)

Stevenson and his fellow writers became increasingly reliant upon the rise of the 'man of letters' to provide favourable critiques of their work and to review current theories of literature itself: the notorious 'realism and romance' debate, for example, took place entirely in articles in periodicals and involved Andrew Lang, the influential man of letters, fighting Stevenson's corner; wily business relations and literary contacts were now a necessity. Meanwhile, we can see how the writer's reliance on contacts and book reviews was anticipated in its humorous depiction in Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875). In the opening of the text we witness Lady Carbury writing three letters to editors hoping for good reviews for her forthcoming book, *Criminal Queens*, which involve various forms of manipulation, including flattery and the promise of a good review in return: her 'conviction' is 'that her end was to be obtained not by producing good books, but by inducing certain people to say that her books were good' (17). Stevenson also followed suit with compliments, instructing one editor to give a copy of *Prince Otto* to his reviewer, 'who is (in his lucid intervals) an admirable and interesting critic. I think he will hate my book; he hated the only other one of mine he ever handled; but I somehow would rather be cursed by Mr Purcell than blessed by another. Can you, without a word of

course of this communication, place *Otto* in his hands?’ (*Letters* 8: 419). Whether or not James Cotton, the recipient of this message, did pass on the content of Stevenson’s letter is unknown; yet Purcell proceeded to produce an extremely flattering review of Stevenson’s latest work in 1886. Writers became reliant on useful contacts and the loyalty of their friends to succeed in a competitive field.

And these coteries were frequently to be found circulating on the club scene. Here, dining associations and more formal, members-only gentlemen’s clubs formed essential networks for writers. Gentlemen’s clubs had emerged from the coffee house culture of the eighteenth century; yet, while some clubs retained a political edge, the main emphasis of the Victorian gentlemen’s club was seemingly on leisure. The rise of the gentlemen’s club demonstrated a change in the perception of free time: membership of a club demonstrated not only that a gentleman had the time for leisure, but that he could pay for it. Richard Dennis argues that: ‘indoor, and therefore more private, elite spaces reflected the increasing commodification of leisure – in restaurants, gentlemen’s clubs, concentrated along Pall Mall from the 1820s’ (120-1). Leisure and private social meetings were now commodities which the wealthy would pay for, and which distinguished them from their working counterparts. Membership to London’s most exclusive literary clubs, such as The Savile (established in 1868), The Athenaeum (1824), the more radical Reform Club (1836), artists’ hang-out, The Garrick (1831) and writers’ club, The Rabelais (1880), required both nomination to the club and a high subscription fee once elected. Yet more than simply leisure, Philip Waller notes the ‘functional value of club membership to an author’ (520). Gentlemen’s clubs enabled men of a similar background and occupation – of the same kind – to meet and gain professional

contacts: they became crucial networks for writers. The club thus became more complex than simply a social space, and instead demonstrated a crossover between business and pleasure, much like the cliché of business transactions occurring on the golf course today. Members of these clubs paid not only to see their friends, therefore, but to make new, and perhaps more useful, ones.

These clubs aimed at ‘incorporating a cultural elite’ (Waller, 512), which included successful members of the artistic and literary world: they were places where those sharing similar interests and characteristics – of the same kind – could associate for business or social purposes. Waller claims that the membership at The Athenaeum ‘united those whose achievement in scholarship and in the practice of arts and science was supreme’ (510); and the same can be said of its rival, The Savile. Yet some members were elected as a result of ‘social class and public standing’ (518) rather than due to their careers as writers: Waller attributes Anthony Hope’s membership of The Savile, for example, to social class and to direct descent from Savilean lineage, his father being a founding member (518). Such were the family-like relations within clubland that an author could, it seems, inherit his clubland affiliation. Yet most elite clubs had rigorous selection procedures and long waiting lists: less well-connected members waited to be elected by current members and then voted in. A successful author, meanwhile, might be fast-tracked as a useful addition to the profile of these prestigious clubs. And, while high-profile members were valuable to the clubs, a club was also a useful meeting-ground for publishers, reviewers and writers and a place to exchange ideas and gain contacts.

But more than simply becoming a place to do business, the club also took on aspects of family relations and became a quasi-familial form, and it is this aspect of

literary club and communal life on which this chapter focuses. The club appropriated the domesticity of the home, while also, and problematically, colonising the ‘primitivity’ of the tribe. The layout and function of the home, as the first section of this chapter will consider, became an important source for the club to draw upon to create a homosocial group which rivalled the relations of the family: as we will see, there was even the concern that the club provided a more successful familial environment than the family home itself. And, in contrast to this, the club also appropriated the ‘savagery’ of tribal kinship relations and recent anthropological ‘discoveries’ concerning the family. While these all-male families resided in their exclusive and sophisticated clubhouses, therefore, they also enjoyed participating in a ‘primitive’ sensibility, in which, it seems, only a gentleman could share. And at the same time as these seemingly ‘savage’ relations were taking over London’s clubland, writers sought the kinship of fellow-artists in the isolated artists’ colonies in France, of which Stevenson also became a part. The shared affinities and exclusivity which characterised this kinship were important aspects of the artistic process at the end of the century.

With the club taking on the contradictory positions of a ‘savage’ and a ‘domestic’ alternative family, Stevenson, as a patron of London’s clubland throughout the 1880s, found himself in the middle of this transformation of family relations. As a member of both The Savile Club and The Athenaeum, Stevenson enjoyed the lifestyle and convenience of the club, and found the contacts he made with other writers at his clubs essential to his success. As a result he became a crucial figure in the changing nature of kinship relations, and in the appropriation of familial relations for communities of people who were not related and in the adoption

of ‘primitive’ ideas by ‘civilised’ society. His own family background and his parents’ initial resistance to his choice of profession are widely documented, and it is clear that Stevenson turned away from his consanguineous kin to seek artistic solace in extra-familial existences: the gentlemen’s club and writers’ communities became crucial to Stevenson’s career. Having renounced the claims of his consanguineous relations in favour of a literary kinship, Stevenson experienced family relations outside of his family.

The difficulty of maintaining the balance of a literary kinship was a dilemma with which Stevenson struggled frequently in his life: not fitting into Edinburgh’s polite social circles, for example, Stevenson co-founded the spoof-society, the rebellious – yet still privileged – ‘L.J.R.’ (Liberty, Justice, Reverence), with Charles Baxter, Walter Ferrier and Bob Stevenson in 1872, in which they shared their writings and discussed ideas, with the aim of disregarding everything their parents told them. As a law student, Stevenson’s dishevelled appearance and velvet jacket left him excluded from the crowd; until he joined the Spec, an elitist, yet anti-establishment, student society. In the 1870s, Stevenson’s membership of the Edinburgh Evening Club, a group for the most influential scientific and literary thinkers of the city, enabled him to mingle with the likes of the anthropologists John F. McLennan and William Robertson Smith (Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 111). Evidently fond of the sense of belonging and exclusive membership which a club brings, Stevenson immersed himself in alternative family configurations; yet despite the kinship offered by Stevenson’s clubs, they were also inevitably exclusive and excluding.

Yet these alternative, and elite, homosocial groups were evidently useful to Stevenson's literary career: the London club scene did not only provide Stevenson with new relationships and a sense of belonging, but also with literary contacts. Behind the doors of The Savile or The Athenaeum were, as we have seen, further clubs *within* the club: here, writers and publishers formed coteries, and gathered around those who seemed most useful or successful. Stevenson was a prime example of this: he surrounded himself (or was surrounded by) a close circle of friends, which remained generally the same throughout his life. The members of the L.J.R. (and other friends such as Sidney Colvin and Edmund Gosse) were there from the start and smoothed Stevenson's pathway to his membership of literary clubs and to fellow writers in London, and they helped to conduct his affairs: Jenni Calder explains that his friends were 'only too anxious to bring him within the establishment, [and] encouraged him to write in a way that was both respectable and refreshing' (*RLS: A Life Study*, 162). There is a sense that Stevenson, the wayward gent, needed to be reined in to conquer his 'primitive' inclinations, and where better to do this than the primitive-civilisation of clubland.

One of the slightly later additions to his admirers who also performed this function was Lang, anthropologist, folklorist, mythologist and man of letters. Following Stevenson's death, Lang wrote that, on first reading his friend's work, he was immediately "sealed of the Tribe of Louis," an admirer, a devotee, a fanatic' ('Recollections', 44).² Lang, of course, was aware of the Tribe members' well-off backgrounds and reputations in elite circles of society, yet he chose to describe them

² Marysa Demoor, however, contrasts Stevenson and Lang's first impressions of each other in her Introduction to *Dear Stevenson: Letters from Andrew Lang to Robert Louis Stevenson* (1990), in which she claims that neither was particularly impressed by the other following their initial meeting (3).

in ‘primitive’ terms: Stevenson’s coterie, like London’s clubland, contained a deliberate undertone of ‘savage’ family relations. That the chief of this apparently ‘savage’ Tribe was Stevenson himself suggested a fierce loyalty to the writer and his ability; this natural authority which Stevenson emitted is evident in his letters, in which he frequently directed members of his Tribe to conduct his personal and professional affairs. These exclusive and elite communities, of which Stevenson was a part – and even a leader – modelled themselves on both the domesticity of the family and, simultaneously, its idealised, ‘savage’ version, creating homosocial, entirely unrelated, quasi-familial groups which evidently both appealed to writers’ sensibilities and played an important part in their success.

‘[T]he management of a club household’: clubbing families

John Tosh explains that: ‘fundamentally the club’s rationale was as an *alternative* to home life, where an ethos of fraternalism replaced the ties of family’ (129). Rather than providing simply a place to while away leisure hours, clubs presented their members with a choice between the family and the clubhouse. By forming an alternative home the club potentially offered a more appealing version of family life to its members. It drew on the domestic sphere of the family to maintain a sense of homeliness for its members: it was possible to experience the same comforts of the family outside of the family home, at the club. And most importantly, to achieve this, one aspect of the domestic setting was crucially left out: there was no role for women, the traditional matriarchs of the home, in the homely-otherness of clubland. While women frequently managed the household aspects of family life, the feminine realm of the home was appropriated – without its main figure – by the male,

homosocial world of clubland. The club created a familial world away from the family and, specifically, separate from its most distinctive member: clubland both rejected and replicated the family model.

Fellow-members of a club, therefore, became akin to an elite form of homosocial family – an exclusive, family-like relationship which had been paid for, and which was an escape from, or a substitute for, the day-to-day realities of the consanguineous/conjugal family. With the presence of women generally not permitted, there were, however, occasional offshoots of women-only clubs, or clubs which permitted women members, such as the Alexandra, Empress and Victoria (that the first women-only club was called the Pioneer suggests that clubland was adventurously exploring a new found land) (Waller, 500). Yet as a house for men only, the nineteenth century gentlemen's club took on an unusual 'family' form: here, men joined a quasi-family of writers, publishers and reviewers in the domestic setting of the clubhouse.

The physical significance of the club as a building was an important factor in the familial relations which it fostered. Known as its 'clubhouse', a club's headquarters was not simply a building, but a house – a domestic residence or dwelling. The Athenaeum's first clubhouse was organised in the same style as a wealthy household: leading off the main hallways were rooms such as the library, the morning room and the drawing room (Cowell, 14-15). Edward Walford's *Old and New London* (1873-8), meanwhile, contained a detailed description of 'the management of a club household' (4:143), in a similar manner to the advice given by domestic manuals such as *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861): Beeton's guide described 'some of those home qualities and virtues which are

necessary to the proper management of a Household' (8). Writing earlier in 1835, Thomas Walker claimed that: 'The building is a sort of palace, and is kept with the same exactness and comfort as a private dwelling' (184). With some clubhouses evolving from hotels, it was common from early on in nineteenth century clubland for a man's club to offer accommodation.³ The club, as these descriptions suggest, offered domestic comfort and a home away from the home; a solely male space where food and accommodation could be procured; a gentleman could even, if he wished, live at his club: one of the draws of Stevenson's *Suicide Club* to its members, for example, is that it provides food and lodging: 'very fair, I believe, and clean, although, of course, not luxurious' (19).

Indeed, the domestic comforts of the club were so similar to the home that it was perceived to be in competition with the family. Walker had written that: 'Married men, whose families are absent find the nearest resemblance to the facilities of home in the arrangements of a club' (184). The club was the ideal place for those away from their family – or, for those seeking to be away from their family. And the similarities between the offerings of the club and the family had become so similar by the time Beeton was writing that she lamented in her Preface:

I have always thought that there is no more fruitful source of family discontent than a housewife's badly-cooked dinners and untidy ways. Men are now so well served out of doors,—at their clubs, well-ordered taverns, and dining-houses, that in order to compete with the attractions of these places, a mistress must be thoroughly acquainted with the theory and practice of cookery, as well as be perfectly conversant with all the other arts of making and keeping a comfortable home. (3)

³ Timbs wrote that: 'The first modern Club mansion in Pall Mall was No. 86, opened as a subscription house, called the Albion Hotel' (7). Late in the nineteenth century, The Athenaeum had to expand its living quarters due to high demand: 'Complaints had long been heard about the need for more accommodation. An effort to secure bedrooms for Members was made in 1874 when it was proposed to acquire carrier premises in Pall Mall and Waterloo Place opposite the Club and to connect them with the Club by an underground passage' (Cowell, 30).

To compete with the allure of clubland the mistress of the house was encouraged to improve her domestic capabilities; such skill was already being provided in London's clubs, it seems. And to be able to contend with clubs, Beeton likened the required attributes of the mistress to those of the commander of an army (7): a spirit of adventure was now needed in the domestic sphere to lure men back from their clubland escapades. The home played an important role in Victorian depictions of family life, and clubland colonised this 'sanctity of the home' (5) for its own, extra-familial and extra-domestic, relations. The familial relations of clubland, therefore, drew together the heimlich and the unheimlich in a literal way. While the club appeared to be homely and borrowed from the domestic sphere, it was, in fact, its opposite: a subscription-only, homosocial institution.

And it was through this domestic set-up that the club provided a practical place to do business and to meet fellow-authors. Amongst the literary scene, clubs formed essential networks for writers and the clubhouse provided a useful crossover between a private house and a place of business. As with a family home, letters could be addressed to the club, and the clubhouse provided access to food and lodging. As David Doughan and Peter Gordan write:

For men of a certain class, membership of one or more London clubs was effectively a social necessity, to be put on one's visiting card, whether or not much use was made of the facilities, although many clubs did provide a cheaper alternative to an hotel for those based outside London; and it could be useful as an accommodation address. (14)

With comforts similar to those found in the traditional Victorian family, the club as a quasi-familial form became a neat crossover between social and professional life, where writers would both inhabit the clubhouse with co-members and use it and its address for business purposes: this was a place where members could meet with

those of the same kind as themselves, and, as such, clubland became a hub of literary kinship groups.

Stevenson was elected to The Savile Club in 1874, and many of his letters in the 1870s and 1880s detail his regular presence at the Club: he wrote to his mother informing her with a strange possessiveness that he was pleased with ‘my club’ and, particularly, its menu (*Letters* 2: 27), and he asked Bob Stevenson to use the Savile address to correspond with him while in London (*Letters* 2: 125). Stevenson treated the Club as his own: it gave him an address, a dining room which provided meals, and a place in which he could meet and gain literary friends and contacts. Indeed, the Club inevitably became a substitute home to Stevenson, which he occupied with members of his Tribe. In 1880, Stevenson wrote a postcard to Edmund Gosse to summon him to The Savile following his return from America: ‘My dear Gosse, I appoint you with an appointment for October 8th, 1880, 1 o’clock p.m. Savile his rustic halls. Please appoint others with appointments referring to the shaggy Pollock and the amiable Middlemore; and let us once again, after all these sorrows, lunch together in the Savile Halls’ (*Letters* 3: 103). The friends with whom Stevenson dined that day also doubled-up as his writing and publishing advisers.⁴ Stevenson, like other members, evidently made use of the club as a location for meetings and discussion, and for socialising. It was at the Savile that Stevenson cemented his friendship with Gosse and was able to conduct meetings with Colvin, and the Club became a focal point for his London appointments.⁵ Gosse, indeed, wrote that Stevenson’s ‘most habitual dwellingplace in London [...] was the Savile Club, then

⁴ Gosse recollected that Lang, Henley and Walter Pollock also appeared at this lunch (48).

⁵ Gosse wrote that: ‘It was in 1877, or late in 1876, that I was presented to Stevenson, at the old Savile club, by Mr Sidney Colvin, who thereupon left us to our devices’ (44).

lodged in an inconvenient but very friendly house in Savile Row. Louis pervaded the club; he was its most affable and chatty member' (45). And Stevenson also assisted old friends such as Henley and Walter Simpson in gaining membership to these clubs (*Letters* 2: 194): for Stevenson, The Savile was a cosy domestic establishment, which he could inhabit with his fellow Tribe members and treat as a second home.

This homely-otherness of the club provided not only a useful location for business and alternative home-life, therefore, but also inevitably a space in which such groups of men could associate with each other in a new, quasi-familial way. Richard Usborne explains that: 'A man's London club offers him a fortress, with many of the amenities of home, but without the distractions of, or the obligations to, his womenfolk' (5). Usborne's description idealises the club as a masculine version of the family home – a 'fortress' – without the burden or delicacy of the effeminising presence of women. Hatten also notes the feminising aspect of domestic life from which, ironically, the club borrowed to create itself as a hub for male kinship:

Increasingly deriding domesticity as emotionally sterile, intellectually tedious, or simply emasculating, middle-class men came to respond to the effort to domesticate and tame their impulses [...] with a backlash that denigrated domesticity and sought a refuge from home and family. The [...] flourishing of men's clubs offered men retreats from the feminized world of domesticity. By the last two decades of the century, popular literature had responded to the change in mood, shifting from domestic themes to the celebrations of the male-dominated world of empire, sailing, and war, largely homosocial worlds that maintained in adult life the bracingly all-male environment of the public school. From the 1880s, this virile world began to be depicted in stirring terms by such successful writers as Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, Bram Stoker, Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad, and Rudyard Kipling. (30)

The club not only provided an alternative family life, but also a 'refuge from home and family'. Despite the similarity and borrowings between the home and the club, the domestic realm was also an emasculating influence. To break away from such

weakness, it seems, men immersed themselves in these alternative familial worlds. And, as Hatten notes, the literature which clubbing writers produced reflected this break from the family in favour of male kinship and adventure – as we will see in Chapter 2, which considers David Balfour’s extra-familial adventures in *Kidnapped*. Like the environment in which Stevenson was writing, which seemingly provided an adventurous, masculine space to offset the feminine influences of the home and family, the plotline of *Kidnapped* focuses on David leaving his family home and the alternative families he encounters during his escapades in the Highlands. This, it seems, was how the club made the virtues of home life different and new: while the clubhouse provided all of the comforts and material functions of a domestic, ‘feminine’, family configuration, the kinship relations in which members took part looked to the masculine, to adventure and, as the next section considers, to the ‘primitive’ to cast off – and simultaneously make use of – its domesticity and implicit femininity.

The Savage and The Savile: clubbing tribes

With clubs providing all of the amenities of the home, therefore, they became both practical and comfortable locations for writers to meet, as we have seen. It was here that Stevenson met others with similar interests and experiences, for as Anthony Lejeune explains: ‘A club, after all, is a place where a man goes to be among his own kind’ (19). But what ‘kind’, exactly, is this? By providing a male homosocial space, the gentlemen’s club facilitated an extra-domestic, masculine kinship, which sought to discard the stifling feminine realm. The relations found within clubland, therefore, appropriated tribal kinship relations and supposedly ‘primitive’ inclinations, which

apparently only gentlemen could experience: the 'Tribe of Louis' is an example of the quasi-familial kinship and shared 'savage' affinities in which Stevenson's group of writers' participated, with Stevenson elected as their leader. Despite residing in comfortable clubhouses, therefore, the attributes which characterised the clubland kinship which was of such importance and use to Stevenson were those of the 'savage'. Clubland became a self-styled world of 'savages', quests and conquests; it stepped out of 'normal' domestic family life to participate in the inclinations of 'primitive' social forms. As quoted above, John Timbs, author of *Clubs and Club Life in London* (1872) wrote that:

THE Club, in the general acceptation of the term, may be regarded as one of the earliest offshoots of Man's habitually gregarious and social inclination; and as an instance of that remarkable influence which, in an early stage of society, the powers of Nature exercise over the fortunes of mankind. It may not be traceable to the time

When Adam dolve, and Eve span;
but, it is natural to imagine that concurrent with the force of numbers must have increased the tendency of men to associate for some common object.
(1)

The relationships of the club, Timbs claimed, stem from 'primitive' man and 'primitive' kinship; it is natural to club together due to a 'common object' and a 'social inclination'. And club kinship is a primal instinct, associated with 'gregarious' and adventurous tendencies. There was a contradictory 'savagery' about elite, and domestic, club life, which privileged the apparent authenticity of ancient kinship relations.

The Savage Club, for example, established in 1848, was considered second-rate by many authors (Waller, 515); yet its formation as an opponent to the refined reputation of clubland is explicit in its name. Andrew Halliday explained in the first *Savage Club Papers* (1867) that:

A little band of authors, journalists, and artists felt the need of a place of reunion, where, in their hours of leisure, they might gather together [...]. When about a dozen of the original members were assembled in the place selected for their meetings, it became a question what the Club should be called. Every one in the room suggested a title. [...] [A]fter we had run the whole gamut of famous literary names of the modern period, a modest member in the corner suggested 'The Shakespeare.'

This was too much for the gravity of one of the company [...].

'Who are we,' he said, 'that we should take these great names in vain? Don't let us be pretentious. If we must have a name, let it be a modest one—one that signifies as little as possible.'

Hereupon a member called out, in a pure spirit of wantonness, 'The Savage!' (ix-x)

Waller explains that: 'Brother Savages revelled in a self-description as "intellectual bohemians"' (515) (yet, of course, the very act of forming their own society generates a sense of exclusivity and pretentiousness; perversely, forming the Savage Club made them all 'insiders' to their 'outsider' status, and everyone else 'outsiders', an idea which we will consider further in Chapter 3). Indeed, *The Savage Club Papers* of 1867 and 1868, consisting of essays written by members who claimed the relations of 'Brother-Savages' both open to sketches of 'primitive' man next to the title-page: the 1867 edition depicts a group of elderly men looking afraid and in awe of a Native American boy; 1868 reveals a tribesman looking out over a ruined city, painting the scene with palette, canvas and easel. Brother Savages clearly associated themselves, in a tongue-in-cheek way, with a purer form of art and kinship. The Savage thus anticipated the tensions between civilised clubland and its 'primitive' undertones in which Stevenson found himself in the middle of in the 1880s. The Savile, meanwhile, was deemed forward-thinking and diverse, and was geographically set apart from other elite clubs, which clearly appealed to those with more bohemian inclinations, such as Stevenson. It, too, presented itself as a rebellious club, which was home to informality and unrefined conversation: Colvin

wrote that '[t]his little society had been founded on a principle aimed against the standoffishness customary in English club life, and all members were expected to hold themselves predisposed to talk and liable to accost without introduction' (28). The Savile was, purportedly, a place where those who disliked the ceremony of other clubs could meet with others of their kind in a less formal arrangement. Yet, like The Savage, it remained a members-only, exclusive establishment: the benefits of its outlandish discussions could only directly reach the few nominated to its realms.

Early in his career, Stevenson planned a satirical piece about The Savile Club, which mockingly revealed the underlying 'savagery' and bravery for which members seemingly desired their club to be known, as well as the rivalry between members of The Savile and The Athenaeum. *Diogenes at the Savile Club*⁶ depicts authors flocking together in a somewhat hysterical manner out of necessity: despite the satirical eye, Stevenson clearly understood that he needed the kinship of the Club, and evidently enjoyed mocking his adopted home. Here, writers are described as 'swordsmen of the pen', and the narrator claims that there is 'something fiery' and 'wild and daring in the scene. Naked genius here strangled serpents in its cradle'. This is how London's clubland would *like* to be seen, it seems – with 'naked genius' and 'wild and daring' members. *Diogenes at the Savile Club* draws attention to the self-styled 'primitive' inclinations of those who participate in club kinship and suggests that this, perhaps, was not exactly the case.

⁶ Roger G. Swearingen dates this, and a further fragment, *Diogenes in London*, to the early 1880s, due to its 'satirical handling of such writers as Matthew Arnold, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Besant and Rice, Gilbert and Sullivan, and Oscar Wilde' (196). Both manuscripts are privately owned, and are under ten pages in length.

The copy of *Diogenes at the Savile Club* used here lacks pagination: all quotations without a citation in this section thus refer to this text.

Yet as a member of The Savile, and having set up rebellious groups in his youth to counteract polite Edinburgh society, Stevenson contributed to this perception of club kinship as a shared, ‘primitive’ affinity. In his correspondence with his Tribe members about The Savile, Stevenson and his tribal kin asserted ‘savage’ inclinations and adopted a conspiratorial and nonchalant air, frequently reverting to Scots dialect; even the bohemian Savile, they suggested, was too ‘civilised’ for the ‘primitivity’ of their tribal kinship. The Tribe set themselves apart, as a coterie *within* the club. His response to his election to the Club in 1874, having been elected by Colvin, was somewhat blasé: ‘I hear I am elected for the Savile, but that to make my calling and election sure I must dub up £10.10: which I can’t having lent my all to a needy friend’ (*Letters* 2: 22). Before he had even joined, Stevenson claimed to stand apart from the perception of clubland as a wealthy and elite world, needing to borrow money to pay the membership fee. And Lang, who had been a member since 1871, wrote to Stevenson, when it was still unknown if he had been elected or not, that: ‘I hope you’ll get in at the Saville [*sic*], and if your native genius, & the spirit of Sir W. W. and the Commune and so on leads you to burn it down, I’ll stand...Petroleum. It is not a howff I fancy much, – a shebeen perhaps one should say’ (Demoor, 34).⁷ Stevenson’s ‘native genius’ made him unsuitable, it seems, for the polite rooms of the Savile, which Lang was keen to point out he regarded only for its bar. By alluding to the spirit of William Wallace in his repartee, Lang depicted a Scottish defiance in the face of a very English club: Stevenson, as a ‘native’ and with Sir W. W.’s ‘spirit’, had an authenticity behind him which other members of the club

⁷ In ‘A Bookman’s Purgatory’ (1887) Lang had described a ‘book-hunter’ who, he implies, goes prowling through the dangerous world of bookshelves. Bookmen and bibliophiles are thus associated with dangerous missions and adventure.

apparently did not. And what is more, this is the ‘spirit’ of romance, with rebellious heroes such as Wallace colonising enemy territory. Through their joking, both Stevenson and Lang positioned themselves rebellious, fiery, Scottish outsiders in what was an urban, city-dwellers’ club, colluding in each others’ quasi-rebellion; this is similar, of course, to how the fictional clubland hero was eventually represented. Crucially, Lang still hoped that Stevenson would be accepted into The Savile: there was a place in clubland, this suggests, for such inclinations. Lang wrote humorously to Stevenson in 1882 to inform him that: ‘The new Savile is quite clean, members don’t know how to take it. Soon it will be dirty enough’ (Demoor, 60). The Savile’s members, he implied, were not used to such high standards, and were far more comfortable in grimy rooms; colonisation of the new clubhouse would soon, however, lower its standards.

In a similar exchange with Baxter in 1887, Stevenson translated a confusion he had got into with the membership fees for a club which ‘defend[s] the Union’ (yet, given the date, is presumably The Athenaeum) into a Scots dialect and fictional characters, asking: ‘Do ye no think mebbe Henley, or Pöllick, or some o’ they London fellies nicht mebbe perhaps find out for me? [...] For I thocht I was sae dām patriotic j’inin’, and it would be a kind o’ a come down to be turned oot again. Mebbe Lang would ken, or mebbe Rider Hāggard: they’re kind o’ Union folks’ (*Letters* 6: 78). As Scotsmen in London there is a sense that they are naturally excluded from the London elite; yet this is a separation, and an apparent coarseness, which they appear to have invented themselves, and which they enjoyed.⁸ The

⁸ Indeed, this exchange appears to be written in the style of ‘Johnston’ and ‘Thomson’, Stevenson’s and Baxter’s aliases during letters and pranks, dating to their membership of their first club, the L. J. R. (*Letters*: 1, 43).

inclusion of Rider Haggard in this letter was no doubt due to his reputation for imperial adventure novels, such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), which featured his regular hero, the colonial champion, hunter and trader, Allan Quatermain. Such an author – and even a protagonist – was clearly a man with whom Stevenson, Baxter, Henley, Pollock and Lang felt they had an affinity. But was Stevenson really an unruly interloper in London's civilised world of clubland? Stevenson and his Tribe positioned themselves as rebellious outsiders, yet this in fact was nothing but clubland convention: clubmen depicted themselves to share a brutal sensibility within an elite world, just as the gentleman adventure hero is depicted in Haggard's – and later Buchan's – novels. While he presented himself as a rebellious outsider in his correspondence, it is clear that Stevenson actually fitted in to clubland circles very well: he was, after all, from a wealthy family, and had bohemian, self-styled 'primitive', inclinations, just as clubland itself was presented to be by those such as Timbs.

But more than simply a form of entertainment, the kinship provided by the Tribe of Louis became a marketing tool. Consisting of pragmatic connections and long-standing friends, the Tribe became a business machine, which put all of its members' skills to use: Stevenson benefitted from the legal knowledge of his long-time friend Charles Baxter, who became his solicitor and who made deals with publishers on Stevenson's behalf; his work was pushed into the public eye by Lang's and Henley's reviews, and he gained publishing opportunities from Henley's position as Editor of the *London* (in which *New Arabian Nights* was first serialised in 1878); Colvin, meanwhile, offered personal and literary guidance and introductions to editors and publishers; Tribe members such as Gosse provided criticism and

discussion. Lang, indeed, proved himself to be a useful addition to Stevenson's Tribe in the realism versus romance debates of the mid-1880s; Stevenson could rely on the fierce loyalty of his literary kin. And it becomes clear from Stevenson's letters that he himself took a central role and directed his Tribe at his will: while attempting to find a publisher for *Prince Otto*, for example, Stevenson leaned heavily on Henley, asking 'Where do we turn? It had better be arranged as soon as possible' (*Letters* 4: 115). His inclusive use of 'we', of course, and his passive sentence construction left Henley to do his bidding.

The Tribe became an early example of product branding and marketing, with each member helping their 'chief' and his literary ambitions, and by being identifiably of a writer's totem in debates such as realism versus romance. In fact, an article of 1906 used this very term in relation to the uses of a literary kinship or affiliation to methods of marketing: it detailed the lighthearted discussions of a meeting of authors about which totemic symbol they should all take up as a way of making their work more immediately recognisable: 'A badge or totem would be a mark of identification for the public' (Hallett, 113).⁹ The 'savage' familial relations of the totem are here explicitly linked to an author and his coterie; the totem, which was believed to have organised the earliest form of familial relations, had now been appropriated by new groupings of authors as a method of advertising. Writers were

⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century the term 'totem' had begun to be used in a figurative sense. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, used it to mean a 'mark' or 'emblem' in 1890 when considering 'the vulgar embroidered smoking-cap which used to be the distinctive totem of the bazaar debauchee' ('The Decadence of Oriental Politeness', 7). In 1893 the word was used to mean 'allegiance' in an article about political loyalties in *The Times*: 'MR. BRYCE, whose totem is very different, threatened the Unionists that their vote against a bogus second Chamber would be remembered against them' ('The farcical character of the Home Rule Bill', 9). That this anthropological term was now in common use in London, and national, newspapers demonstrates a distinct shift in its use. No longer confined to specialist history or science journals, the 'totem' was now deemed suitable to describe a variety of relationships in contemporary life: at some point, it seems, the 'savage' familial relations of the totem became appropriate to express late-nineteenth century kinship relations themselves.

aligning themselves with anthropological ideas and ‘primitive’ kinship states; this, it seems, suggested their shared attitudes and opinions, as well as providing a selling-point. However, coteries were not always clearly distinct from one another: this becomes evident when we consider Peter D. McDonald’s study, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880-1914*. Here, we can see that it was not solely Stevenson’s Tribe after all. The focus of McDonald’s study is on Henley’s ‘circle’, of which Stevenson is referred to as a part: Henley ‘recruited an impressive band of writers’, we are told, including Lang and Stevenson (32), pointing towards a whole network of coteries forming in the late-nineteenth century and inter-tribal liaisons and ‘marriages’. Each writer, it seems, was the totemic figure of his own tribe – some more extensive and prestigious than others, and with inevitable interlinking and intermarriages – in order to gain maximum exposure for, and benefit to, their writing. Yet the kinship offered by Stevenson’s Tribe, and others like it, both promoted Stevenson himself and created reviewing, writing and publishing opportunities for its members. This quasi-‘primitive’ method of organisation and networking was crucial to the late-nineteenth century writer: literary kinship was a method of self-marketing by associating with those of the same kind, and a way of gaining useful endorsements.

And by the beginning of the twentieth century, this idea of the totem organising contemporary forms of kinship was being applied to clubland itself. Twenty-two years after Stevenson’s death, and half a century after McLennan’s studies sparked an interest in totemism, Buchan published his First World War adventure novel, *Greenmantle* (1916). Richard Hannay, now a recognisable figure after the success of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), is hurriedly called to the Foreign

Office, where he is assigned undercover work to discover a secret weapon which Germany is hiding. On this latest spying mission he meets the German, Gaudian, with whom he feels an immediate affinity: 'Gaudian was clearly a good fellow, a white man and a gentleman. I could have worked with him, for he belonged to my own totem' (67). Hannay apparently shares a sense of kinship with his enemy not due to any sympathy with the German's cause, but because he is white and, most importantly, a 'gentleman': Gaudian conveys the invisible honourable and polite traits and status which is required for this vague position.¹⁰ Totemism had evidently come a long way from McLennan's use of the term as a 'primitive' form of social organisation; it was now a method of identification for respectable gentlemen and, seemingly, at the opposite end of the scale from 'savage' primitivism. Usborne explains that: 'Buchan called the self-protective cell the "totem". For all these pecunious gentleman adventurers there is a background of powerful friendships. It is the "totem", the system of the Club. The hero is a decent chap, and, as far as possible, he kills only bad chaps. If something goes wrong, and an innocent man gets killed, well, his powerful friends know that the hero meant no harm' (11). The 'primitive' family form of the totem was now associated with clubland and 'powerful friendships'; it was a system by which gentlemen could identify others of their kind.

This appropriation of the 'primitive' by the 'civilised' was, Marianna Torgovnick argues, a crucial part of modernist discourse: 'A significant motivation for primitivism in modernism [...] is a new version of the idyllic, utopian primitive:

¹⁰ Arlene Young explains that: 'As the nineteenth century progresses, the gentleman becomes an increasingly unstable symbol; "gentleman" becomes a value-laden term that is paradoxically empty of meaning. Gentlemanly types proliferate; there is the gentleman of birth, of wealth, of breeding, of religion, or of education, to mention just a few possibilities. At the same time, the essence of what a gentleman is becomes increasingly indefinable [...]' (6). This confusion concerning what constituted a gentleman was double-edged, for the position was both being appropriated by the lower orders and the rising idea of the entrepreneur.

[...] the wish for physical, psychological and social integrity as a birthright, within familial and cultural traditions that both connect to the past and allow for a changing future' (245). The idealisation of the 'primitive', she argues, is everywhere in Western modern culture; it provides us with a sense of authenticity and connects us to our past, while also enabling us to make predictions about what is to come: 'the primitive becomes a place to project feelings about the present and to draw blueprints of the future' (244). Yet this leaves late-Victorian clubland – and kinship – in a complex position. While, on the one hand, the club and its exclusive culture can be seen as an emblem of high Victorianism, it was also, therefore, a thoroughly modern affair, which both used and cast off the stifling domesticity of family relations to participate in the apparent authenticity of 'primitive', family-like, clubland kinship. By adopting 'primitive' family forms for both the social and business relations within the quasi-domestic set-up of clubland, the kinship found in literary coteries and clubs indicated a change in the perception of kinship relations, from the consanguineous/conjugal family form to the explicitly unrelated, homosocial, tribal relations which are a natural occurrence between those who share the same sensibilities. Clubland became an exotic, 'primitive' realm in which men could associate in a new way with like-minded 'adventurers' – of the same kind as one another – away from the stifling domesticity of the Victorian family.

Yet the very idea that men needed a separate family away from the supposedly 'natural', blood-family, is itself problematic, for it suggests a general need for extra-familial group relations, as opposed to specifically consanguineous ones. Men, gentlemen's clubs implied, participate in an innate 'primitivity', which the delicacies of the domestic, Victorian family could not share; it was the relations

found in the club with which gentlemen felt most at ease.¹¹ Late-Victorian clubland generated families of gentlemen, based around a shared, seemingly ‘savage’ organisation and ‘primitive’ feeling, that, as Usborne states, a fellow-member is a ‘decent chap’ and, as Hannay claims, he is therefore of the same totem. Within the homely-otherness of the club’s apparently domestic setting was a form of gentleman who identified and associated with others of his kind in a quasi-‘primitive’ way. And it was this kinship which the literary world both participated in and made use of.

‘[W]e live just like a family’: clubbing colonies

These quasi-familial relations of shared sensibilities were also the aim of the newly popular concept of the artists’ colony. While these rural communities may seem to be a long way away from London’s world of clubbing, clubland and colonies were not all that different at all, and neither was the kinship which each offered to its members: with The Savile claiming to be a bohemian (yet exclusive) artists’ hang-out, rural painters’ communities were formed around similar principles. While they occupied hotels and took part in communal domestic activities, the painters’ community, as we will see, was also ‘totemic’ in Buchan’s use of the term, and involved ‘primitive’ sensibilities in that which was actually a bourgeois enterprise, populated mainly by foreign tourists: this was also a place in which members would live with others of their kind.¹² During his travels in France in the 1870s, for

¹¹ Louise de la Ramee (under her pen name Ouida), for example, described the smoking room of a club as a refuge for free-spirits and mistreated gentlemen in her adventure romance, *Under Two Flags* (1867): ‘that chamber of liberty, that sanctuary of the persecuted, that temple of refuge, thrice blessed in all its forms throughout the land, that consecrated Mecca of every true believer in the divinity of the meerschaum, and the paradise of the nargile—the smoking room’ (17).

¹² Jacobs explains that: ‘By the mid-1870s there were probably more foreign artists in Barbizon than French ones. These foreigners also began to dominate—sometimes completely—the many artist colonies that by now were being set up elsewhere in rural France. In many cases colonies were

example, Stevenson was one of many who stopped at Barbizon, in the forest of Fontainebleau, one of the oldest established artists' colonies: he wrote that Fontainebleau was 'a stirring place to live in. [...] [Y]ou pass from scene to scene, each vigorously painted in the colours of the sun, each endeared by that hereditary spell of forests on the mind of man who still remembers and salutes the ancient refuge of his race' ('Fontainebleau', 119). Fontainebleau was, it seems, a suitable place for artistic people to gather as it had 'authentic' claims to kinship – 'the ancient refuge of his race' – and was, as a result, a 'stirring' place in which to reside. (In fact, members of Stevenson's London Tribe, such as Bob Stevenson and the artist, Will Low, were also to be found at Barbizon). Like clubland, artists' colonies modelled themselves on wayward inclinations and a belief in their inclusivity amidst the formalities and elitism of the rest of the world. Yet, in fact, the kinship offered by these groups also revealed itself to be excluding and exclusive: it was by maintaining a distance from the outer world that, it seems, artistic affinities could be fostered.

While named 'artists' colonies', these communities were not solely occupied by painters: some writers also made the journey to colonies to experience the communal living which these groups offered.¹³ These colonies were predominantly male, although they were not solely so: unlike in clubland, women were also admitted, and this inclusivity no doubt added to the liberal ideals with which these

formed simply because a cluster of foreign artists decided to put up at a particular village or small town' (11).

¹³ Stevenson, of course, visited Barbizon and Grez in the 1870s; in his study of the California painters' colony, *Artists at Continent's End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1875-1907*, Scott A. Shields notes that Stevenson visited the Monterey colony in 1879 and it was also visited by Charles Warren Stoddard and the journalist, Fred Somers, in 1878 (18).

groups were associated.¹⁴ In her study, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe 1870-1910* (2001), Nina Lübbren explains that:

Rural artists' colonies existed for most of the nineteenth century. The first were formed in the 1820s (Barbizon, Chailly and Frauenchiemsee), and others followed in the decades after. Their heyday, however, was in the last thirty years of the nineteenth and the first ten of the twentieth century, when over two-thirds of all artists' colonies were established, peaking at thirty-two new formations in the 1880s. Moreover, in this period, the artistic populations of already-established colonies were at their height, with some villages attracting over one hundred artists per season. (3)

While Lübbren cites many reasons for the increase in popularity of such colonies at the end of the nineteenth century, including nostalgia and growing industrialism and urbanisation (3), we can also associate this need to group together and close off from the world with the adoption of quasi-family relations by professional groups such as writers and artists at the end of the nineteenth century, and the shared affinities in which these groups were perceived to participate.

Artists' communities, like clubland, provided a physical place in which people with the same interests could gather, and, as a result, the artists' colony took the form of a communal home away from the home, in which participants not only dedicated time to their work, but to their shared social responsibilities as well. Lübbren describes the 'domestic setting' of the inns at Barbizon (24) and the 'close family circle of warmth and secure routine' (26) in which members participated, and explains that:

Rural artists' communities were characterised by a particular form of sociability. Artists lived, worked, dined, sang and played together; they organised communal picnics and parties; they admired, befriended, irritated and, not infrequently, married each other. And, of course, they painted

¹⁴ Nina Lübbren's research suggests that, of 253 recorded artists who visited Barbizon until 1907, three per cent were women. Fifty-three per cent were French, eleven per cent American and 6 per cent British (166). At Grèz-sur-Loing, 119 artists were recorded, of which eighteen per cent were women. Here, thirty-three per cent were Scandinavian, thirty per cent American and twenty-one per cent British (170).

together, looked at each other's pictures and talked a great deal about art. It is crucial to note that artists' colonies were not simply haphazard collections of individuals who happened to share the same space but cohesive social entities with shared rituals and commitments. (17)

The relations that Lübbren describes are similar to that of the family: artists would live together, eat together, socialise together and even marry one another. Indeed, it was at the colony in Grèz-sur-Loing, near Barbizon, that Stevenson met Fanny Osbourne and her daughter, Belle, in 1876.¹⁵ As Lübbren points out, they did not simply occupy this space together; they became 'cohesive social entities', interrelated through their common obligations and interests. Living together and with a rigid daily structure, the group took on a familial existence and participated in shared domestic activities. In fact, Lübbren notes that artists' groups bonded through the 'ritualisation of daily life. Artistic life in villages was regulated by clearly set-out daily routines' (20). Artists arrived at their colonies expecting to participate in these communal commitments.

Further aspects of these obligations were divulged by Stevenson in a letter to Baxter, in which he described the quasi-familial life he led with the fellow-occupants of the Hôtel Siron in Barbizon:

My dear Charles, I am here in a funny little Society [...]. Everybody is very jolly and we live just like a family; d—d like a family in fact – family secrets are produced right and left and I could tales unfold etc. You have no idea how things are managed in such a Society. The Stool of Repentance, for example, at which we play often, is really a serious censorship: nobody dreams of giving any opinion that they do not mean; and one is told the cheerfulest home truths to one's face, seated on a chair in face of laughing audience. You have no idea what fun it is, especially on the sort of tentative terms on which we all are, to hear what people are thinking about you in the clearest terms [...]. (*Letters* 1: 443)

¹⁵ While marrying Fanny formed a rather unusual family, things could have become even more confusing for Stevenson. Mehew writes that: 'At Grez in the summer of 1876 Bob met RLS's future wife, Fanny Osbourne, before his cousin arrived on the scene, and her letters show that she was strongly attracted to him; Bob in his turn was half in love with Fanny's daughter, Belle' (*Letters* 1: 36-7).

Evidently enjoying the kinship in which he was participating, the family-like existence which Stevenson describes appears to pivot around untamed opinions and sharing and exchanging secrets. Yet despite being on ‘tentative terms’, Stevenson claims that the group is ‘just like a family’; it is their gregarious inclinations, it seems, and their truthfulness, which has created this kinship, not any lengthy friendships. And, what is more, these ‘family secrets’ are being ‘produced’ by the group: this could suggest that members of the colony are sharing their own family secrets; but, more probably, it implies that these are the ‘family’ secrets of the ‘Society’ itself. The ritual humiliation which the production of these ‘truths’ and ‘secrets’ involves – the ‘serious censorship’ of the Stool of Repentance – appears to be a customary rite of passage for all ‘family’ members.

This quasi-domestic space in which the group’s communal lifestyle played out, therefore, also contained an undercurrent of ‘primitivity’. Indeed, we saw Timbs explain earlier that the club was ‘one of the earliest offshoots of Man’s habitually gregarious and social inclination’ (1), and the rituals and rites of passage which formed the artists’ colony became another variant of this ‘inclination’. As one of the oldest artists’ colonies, the community at Barbizon had even created its own myth of origin. As we saw Lang suggest in the Introduction, a myth of origin was an important part of ‘primitive’ kinship relations, in which all members of a tribe could believe and which created a feeling of community. Lübbren states that:

One of the more romantic versions of the ‘discovery’ of Barbizon in 1824 recounts how three painters, starting out on a tramp through the forest in search of motifs, got lost as it was getting dark. Following the sound of a cowherd’s horn and the tinkling of bells, they encountered a local who led them to nearby Barbizon, ‘escorted by 40-50 cows with a bell each’. Many

stories told in retrospect about a colony's 'pioneers' were shaped by a similar mythology of adventure and discovery. (5)

Barbizon was apparently 'discovered' by artists on a night-time adventure in the wilderness, and soon populated with similar adventurous spirits; Barbizon even has its own adventure trio – three painters – leading the way. Following in their footsteps, new arrivals at the artists' colony could share in this feeling of remote community and its spirit of adventure.

Other early accounts of the colony describe it as a 'primitive' place: Michael Jacobs writes that 'The American writer James Fenimore Cooper visited the forest of Fontainebleau in 1827 and is said to have found the place "exceeding in savage variety" anything that he had seen in his native country. This rather extravagant description was echoed by innumerable visitors to the region in the nineteenth century' (17). The apparently untamed and primeval forest of Fontainebleau rendered it a fitting location for an artists' colony – as we saw Stevenson write above, it was deemed a 'stirring' place. However, as Jacobs goes on to reveal:

This place, supposedly so wild and evocative of a primeval past, was in fact in the sixteenth century associated with one of the most sophisticated court cultures of the Renaissance. In what is now the town of Fontainebleau, right in the heart of the forest, the French king Francis I decided to build a palace incorporating the most advanced features of contemporary Italian art and architecture. (17)

Barbizon was not a pioneer-land, founded on the principle of adventure, but a long-established seat of the French monarchy.

Stevenson light-heartedly described the organisation of the Barbizon colony in 'Fontainebleau' (1882). In this revealing piece, he likened the domestic 'clubhouse' of the colony – the Hôtel Siron, the occupants of which, we saw above,

formed a quasi-family to Stevenson – to clubland, as well as describing the shared sensibility which members of the colony were deemed to participate in:

Theoretically, the house was open to all comers; practically, it was a kind of club. The guests protected themselves, and, in so doing, they protected [Hôtel] Siron. Formal manners being laid aside, essential courtesy was the more rigidly exacted; the new arrival had to feel the pulse of the society; and a breach of its undefined observances was promptly punished. [...] I have seen people driven forth from Barbizon; it would be difficult to say in words what they had done, but they deserved their fate. ('Fontainebleau', 128-9)

Despite his evident enjoyment of the group and his playful tone, Stevenson was clearly aware that, crucial to the creation of art was not only the apparent 'primitivity', but also the exclusivity, of the club: neither the club nor the colony are open to all. While, on the surface, the group appears to offer an inclusive atmosphere, it requires rules and discipline. The colony, like the club, becomes a contradiction between 'primitive' assumptions and 'civilised' rules: '[g]iven artists' insistence on informality, such routines may appear to be surprisingly, even excessively, regulated' (Lübbren, 20).

And, as this passage demonstrates, the artists' colony relied on a similar bohemian affinity to the gentleman's club: only others of their kind are admitted. Those who cannot participate in the regulated kinship required at the Hôtel Siron are exposed through their inability to share in the sixth sense in which its members participate. A new member must prove himself to share the group's vision and feelings: the group functions not through words, but from the shared sensibility of its members. When members are excluded Stevenson cannot say 'in words what they had done' but still knows that 'they deserved their fate'. Those unable to participate in this 'feeling' or sensibility of kinship, which the artists among the group claim to share, are cast out: Stevenson states rather breezily that: 'These sentences of

banishment were never, in my knowledge, delivered against an artist; such would, I believe, have been illegal; but the odd and pleasant fact is this, that they were never needed' (130).¹⁶ While revealing a sense of shared purpose for those of a similar kind, Stevenson's entire description of the artists' colony contains an undercurrent of exclusion, of both the artists, who must congregate separately from the outer world, and of those whom they seek to cast out. As Lübbren states: 'Group cohesion arises as much out of demarcation and a sense of difference from those without as out of internal unity' (20). The same exclusion and exclusivity which dominated 'savage' clubland evidently extended across all forms of kinship, as we will consider in detail in Chapter 3, which considers the role of the outsider 'in' kinship relations.

Like the literary kinship of tribes found in London's elite clubland, this 'primitive' kinship was, however, not as spontaneous or untamed as it may appear.

The institution of a painters' colony is a work of time and tact. The population must be conquered. The inn-keeper has to be taught, and he soon learns, the lesson of unlimited credit [...]. A colour merchant has next to be attracted. A certain vogue must be given to the place [...]. And no sooner are these first difficulties overcome, than fresh perils spring up upon the other side; the bourgeois and the tourist are knocking at the gate. This is a crucial moment for the colony. If these intruders gain a footing, they not only banish freedom and amenity; pretty soon, by means of their long purses, they will have undone the education of the innkeeper; prices will rise and credit shorten; and the poor painter must fare farther on and find another hamlet. ('Fontainebleau', 111-2)

This is not an organic community which nature 'bloweth where she listeth' (Lang, 'Realism and Romance, 691); it is a 'work of time and tact', carefully sculpted into a group. Painters, it seems, like the writing networks of London's clubland, cannot work alone or amidst an eclectic society; they require the kinship of those of their kind in order to work successfully. Artistic life is presented as a continual struggle to

¹⁶ Shields also notes the shared beliefs and opinions amongst colony members: 'many were of like mind when it came to art and politics' (3).

maintain a separate, ideal, liberal (yet clearly exclusive) society and then to find or create another when the initial one inevitably fails: the artist is apparently a noble figure who must fight to retain his innocent and idealistic lifestyle. This, it seems, is communal art at its best: to maintain this seclusion from the outer world the local community must be 'conquered' and 'intruders' and convention must be shut out: the kinship offered by such colonies is something to be protected. Yet the painters' colony presents a similar problem of exclusivity and exclusion to the L.J.R. and the Spec, and even London's clubs such as The Savage Club.

By colonising a portion of rural France, these communities fostered alternative familial configurations by maintaining the façade of free-living, easy-going, adventurous bohemianism, all of which were seemingly conducive to the creation of art, yet they were, in fact, governed by the same unwritten policies and general 'feeling' that a new member was a 'good chap', which underpinned London's clubland. These clubbing communities, it seems, required this self-styled, 'primitive' existence (within the domestic setting of the clubhouse or the hotel) as a part of their separation from the conformity and sterility of real life. While Stevenson was aware of the elitism of kinship and clubland, therefore, he also helped to maintain it under the façade of artistry and the 'primitive', and by perpetuating the sentiment of the Tribe. Both forms of kinship thus colonised 'primitive' ideas and ideals in order to forge their family-like bonds.

A literary kinship

By colonising familial relations for pragmatic purposes, late-Victorian gentlemen's clubs became far more complex than merely high-class social groups; they became

indicators of a new era of kinship relations, in which the family-like was to be found in circles outside of the family, and in which these quasi-familial relations were given a new, practical purpose by the writing world. Such relations were a necessary condition of artistic life; similar, family-like relations were also to be found amidst artists' colonies. Clubs not only borrowed from the domestic realm to create the comforts of home, sometimes more successfully than the home itself, but they then sought to eradicate its feminising influence by creating male-only, homosocial quasi-families, which privileged a return to 'primitive' kinship. Clubland drew upon the concept of the tribe to describe the kinship it offered: populated by pseudo-savage gentlemen, who, just by being of this 'kind', can sense others of their tribal kin, the club offered a 'primitive' form of inclusivity – to those of the correct sensibilities. Coteries and clubland took on elements of both the Victorian domestic household and tribal kinship to create a way for male-dominated groups to perform both a social and a business function. And Stevenson, an active clubman, was right in the middle of this movement to a literary kinship, and at the centre of and central to this colonisation of family relations by clubbing communities.

Writers such as Stevenson left the feminine domestic space of the home to populate the 'primitive' sphere of the clubhouse; they stepped outside of the family to participate in a clubland quasi-family. Yet by modelling themselves on the apparent authenticity of 'primitive' kinship forms, such as the totem, writers' clubs modelled themselves not simply on the inclusion of those sharing 'savage' sensibilities, but also on the exclusion which characterised totemic relations. These exclusive, extra-familial forms were crucial to the artist at the end of the nineteenth century in both practical and theoretical ways: the homely-otherness of the

homosocial club was necessary to the writer of new forms of literature which were now readily available, and ‘savage’ kinship forms were reflected in this clubland culture. And the writing which these authors produced featured adventurers leaving their families behind in favour of all-male kinship, or ‘savage’ forms of kinship, as the next chapter considers: the environment in which clubland gentlemen were writing was reproduced and commented on in their fictional worlds.

However, when Stevenson relocated to Samoa towards the end of his life, the interest and authenticity of these clubland groups, to Lang, at least, suddenly appeared to wane. With Stevenson now a real-life explorer and anthropologist – even a romance hero, from the point of view of those whom he left behind – sailing from island to island and encountering local indigenous communities, The Savile, perhaps, seemed a corrupt influence, where the ‘primitive’ could only be enacted. Lang, who was a rare friend of Stevenson’s in supporting his move to Samoa, cited the influences of The Savile as softening and damaging compared to the natural environment which Stevenson now inhabited: ‘The *Athenaeum*, – but the truth is not in it, – says you are passing weary of Samoa. I hope not, *don’t* come here. You don’t need the sweet influences of the Saville [*sic.*]: I never hardly go near it. I got so awfully tired of the same old talk’ (Demoor, 124). Lang’s reproach for The Savile, of course, was a tacit nod to their ‘Tribal’ kinship of old, and to their indicatively superior status; yet Lang evidently still attended the club, despite his desire to suggest otherwise. Having taken on ‘primitive’ ideas for contemporary London life, Stevenson was now experiencing these ‘survivals’ first-hand and, according to Lang, no longer required the phoney ‘primitive’ kinship of The Savile. Yet even in the South Pacific, Stevenson found kinship crucial to his writing life,

becoming the leader of the *Sa Tusitalá* – the Clan of Stevenson – and founding a new Tribe of Louis.¹⁷

¹⁷ Lloyd Osbourne wrote in his Introduction to the Tusitala edition that: ‘We were the *Sa Tusitalá*, the Clan of Stevenson, and this was the daily enunciation of our solidarity’ (xvii).

EXILE: TOTEM AND TABOO

2. '[S]ome kinless loon': extra-familial adventure in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*

All the members of a totem clan regard each other as kinsmen or brothers and sisters, and are bound to help and protect each other. The totem bond is stronger than the bond of blood or family in the modern sense.

J. G. Frazer, 'Totemism' (1887)

The idea of the father is dominant in critical readings of Stevenson's work: the oppressive influence of Thomas Stevenson in his son's life has led to a widespread acknowledgement that the family relations depicted in Stevenson's writings are, at least to some extent, autobiographical. Stevenson himself was concerned that he may have inherited some of his parents' personal traits when he purchased Francis Galton's *Record of Family Faculties* (1883), a do-it-yourself family attributes predictor.¹ And as we have seen in the Introduction, the concept of Oedipal struggle is rife amongst Stevenson studies, and quasi-autobiographical readings of father-son relations in works including *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Weir of Hermiston*, *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* and even *The Wrecker* have strayed into recent critical analysis. Alan Sandison, for example, argues that *Kidnapped* is an Oedipal struggle for David's independence (*Appearance of Modernism*, 179-214), and William Gray contends that:

It is perhaps significant that when Stevenson wrote in *Kidnapped* about the unhoused wanderings of the boy David, he himself was in Bournemouth [...] in what was not really his own house (Thomas Stevenson having gifted the house to Fanny as a way of keeping some kind of rein on Louis). In contrast, the classically happy ending of *Catriona*, which sees David established as the

¹ Harman claims that in '1884 or thereabouts' Stevenson purchased a copy of Galton's *Record of Family Faculties* (1). This book was 'designed for those who care to forecast the mental and bodily faculties of their children, and to further the science of heredity' (Galton, 1). Reid provides a scan of a page filled out by Fanny Stevenson on Thomas Stevenson, which notes Thomas's 'temperament of genius' as well as his 'anger' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 66-7).

Laird of Shaws, may reflect Stevenson's own position once he had come into his inheritance [...]. (63)

Gray reads David's disinheritance in *Kidnapped* as a reflection both of the tensions surrounding Stevenson's own legacy from and relationship with his father and of the 'happy ending' which ensued on the death of Thomas Stevenson, signifying an end to his troubled paternal ties and the beginnings of a new-found independence. Yet this preoccupation with paternal legacy – and, indeed, with Stevenson's relationship with his father – is a concern which this chapter seeks to question: *Kidnapped* does not contain the clear familial resolution that critics have suggested.

The popular conception that *Kidnapped* is based around David's search for a replacement paternal role-model is similarly misleading. Critics such as Barry Menikoff claim that: 'David is in search of a father, as every reader quickly recognizes' (97); however, while David has been recently orphaned and is alone in the world, his adventures are not an attempt to resolve his isolated position by re-discovering a father-figure.² Far from mourning the loss of his father at the beginning of the novel, David explains that: 'I, for my part, was overjoyed to get away out of that quiet country-side, and go to a great, busy house, among rich and respected gentlefolk of my own name and blood' (10). David's initial reaction is relief and excitement at the prospect of leaving his family home, not devastation at the loss of his emotional ties to his close relations. Yet his expectations of 'respected'

² Stephen Shapiro describes *Kidnapped* as 'the story of young David Balfour's unwitting search for his patrimony' (132). In his chapter on *Kidnapped* in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (1996), Alan Sandison documents the substitute-fathers whom David encounters, arguing that David's travels are rather an attempt to gain independence from these 'fathers' – a 'renunciation of the father' (189) as part of his journey to adulthood: 'Ebenezer [...] is the first of several menacing father-figures whom David has to confront. [...] That his uncle should have devised such a premature ending for David is of course, eloquent of his need to ensure that his nephew will never succeed in dispossessing the father-substitute' (182-3). Sandison also casts Hoseason (186), Alan (200), Mr Campbell (188) and Edinburgh's lawyers (200) as substitute fathers with whom David must do battle, and Catriona as a mother-figure (190).

consanguineous relations fall short in the figure of his Uncle Ebenezer, and in order to make sense of this the novel swiftly becomes a study of his own, and alternative, family structures.

This chapter will address *Kidnapped* as an exploration of substitutes for the family form: contrary to widely-accepted critical opinion that David desires a father, this is a novel which focuses on what it means *not* to be related to one another and, in doing so, it details the failure of a supposedly ‘natural’, consanguineous family and its system of inheritance. Far from being a confident novel about the hero’s triumphs with his new-found ally, Alan Breck, *Kidnapped* plants a sense of anxiety at its very beginning by documenting the legally-acknowledged, blood family in strife. The novel then embarks upon an ethnographic tour of different social forms, contemplating the differences between the clans, the ‘legal’ family and the ‘natural’ family, before returning seemingly to paper over its findings and to reap the benefits of the aristocratic model of the eldest son-as-heir: this is not, however, the simple ‘happy ending’ which Gray asserts.³ David’s adventures in Scotland question the difference between ‘family’ and ‘friendship’, and ‘legal’ and ‘natural’, family structures: *Kidnapped* is an assessment of different kinds of family-like groups, and the alternatives to the traditional, and outmoded, family structure; it is a novel about exile, extra-familial groups and outsiders. *Kidnapped* does not depict an anxiety between father and son, but it dispels the stable notion of ‘family’ altogether.

Scotland is important to a study of kinship forms: its Highland clan system relies on an extended form of family, in which members do not have to be related to one another through blood at all. While clans were a system of social and political

³ We will encounter the idea of David – and others of Stevenson’s characters – as ethnographer and outsider ‘within’ a foreign culture, in the next chapter.

organisation in the Highlands, in the nineteenth century they also represented a broader, romanticised view of Scotland as a whole to the wider world: this family-like form became representative of national values. The clan had become a somewhat mythical concept by the nineteenth century and a romanticised Highlands was embraced throughout the Victorian period, which sustains the Scottish tourist industry to this day.⁴ The Highland Society of London, for example, clarified its authorised, ‘official’ clan tartans in the early nineteenth century, promoting a sense of clan identity through invented uniforms.⁵ In 1880, the company Chalmers’, which claimed to be ‘patronised by the Royal Family’, published their *Descriptive Catalogue of SCOTTISH CLAN and Family TARTANS WITH LIST OF Native Dyes*; the back cover claims that, ‘TOURISTS and SPORTSMEN When in the Highlands SHOULD VISIT Chalmers’ SCOTCH TWEED And ROYAL TARTAN WAREHOUSE (Established 1823)’. The brochure features an illustration of a man modelling the ‘traditional’ clothing in which we are to imagine tourists blending in on their holidays. Clan kinship, such catalogues suggested, was an attractive, romanticised social form.

A similar descriptive catalogue of ‘The Tartans of Scotland’ was published in Toronto in 1890, while James Grant published a lengthier study with the same title in 1886, in which he wrote a preface explaining that: ‘THIS Book has been produced to meet a rapidly increasing demand, both at home and abroad, for a high class work on

⁴ Katherine Haldane Grenier’s study, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland, 1770-1914* (2005) details Victorian tourists’ perceptions of the Highlands and, particularly, Highland dress, as well as the history of tartan, dating back to 1600 (159-6).

⁵ Hugh Cheape writes that: ‘The London Highland Society instigated research into clan and family tartans and in 1815 wrote to the chieftains and heads of families asking them to “furnish as much of the tartan of their clans as will serve to show the patterns”’ (21).

“The Tartans of Scotland”. The popularity of this Highland ‘uniform’ was worldwide:

Tartan, the use of which in former times was confined to the Highlanders of Scotland, is now worn, more or less, over all the world. Many of the patterns are very beautiful, and are now manufactured in all qualities; from the strong, rough plaid and kilt of the gillie to the finest silk, satin, or velvet for the dress of a lady. (Grant)

The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of tartan as a fashion-statement; this once ‘rough plaid’ material was now available in silks and satins so that women could also participate in the romantic ‘savagery’ of clan kinship. The performance of plays such as ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’ (by W. T. Montcrieff, first performed in 1829 and published by *Dick’s Standard Plays* in 1887), meanwhile, maintained this romantic perception of clans, to which *Kidnapped* certainly adds. The clan, it seems, in a similar way to the supposed ‘savagery’ of the gentlemen’s club, became a desirable modern social form: one privately-published and distributed Edinburgh monthly magazine in the late-nineteenth century, which contained local gossip and contributions from the Sandeman family, as well as details of their family history, was entitled *The Clan*, for example; the name seemingly giving the family and community a close-knit, idealistic and no doubt ironically ‘savage’ or unruly air.

Yet not all studies were romanticised commercial ventures. Towards the end of the nineteenth century a more academic approach to the Scottish clans began to appear in historical and social studies. Rev. Thomas MacLauchlan and John S. Keltie published a two-volume study, *A History of the Scottish Highlands: Highland Clans and Regiments* (1875), which they justified by exclaiming that:

DURING the last thirty years, the patriotic labours of the various Scottish book-clubs,—The Abbotsford, The Bannatyne, The Iona, The Maitland, The Spalding Clubs—the works of the various eminent Scottish antiquaries and historians, not to mention many valuable papers and pamphlets, have not only

subjected everything connected with the history of the Highlands to an unsparing and searching criticism, but have also brought to light many new facts, and opened up formerly unthought-of tracks of inquiry. Such a flood of light has thus been thrown on all matters connected with the Highlands, that the publishers feel BROWNE'S *History of the Highlands and Clans*,—the work on which this publication is to a certain extent based,—has fallen behind the age, and that, to keep pace with the advanced state of historical research, a NEW WORK IS DEMANDED. Therefore, in preparing the work now presented to the public, it has been found necessary to make such extensive alterations and additions, that the publishers feel justified in calling it a NEW WORK. (1: 1)

According to this study, the clans were the topic of widespread research across Scotland, and the focus of 'unsparing and searching criticism'; as such, advances in clan studies during this period had already surpassed the current authority on the matter, published not long earlier in 1862. This new study was an historical account of the different clan formations and their cultural backgrounds, recounting their music and literature.

This more academic focus on clan kinship also stretched to a scientific interest in the social configuration of the groups. That Edmund Burt's *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to His Friend in London* (1754) was reprinted in 1876 by William Paterson suggests a reignited interest in the social customs and structures of the Scottish clans. While the awkward juxtaposition between 'Gentleman' and 'London', and 'North of Scotland' in the title is clear, Burt's *Letters* claimed to take the form of a distanced social study of the Highlands, written during his time working there as a road engineer, and Menikoff identifies the text as a key source for Stevenson's novel.⁶ This return to Burt looks back to a pre-Culloden

⁶ Stevenson referred to Burt in letters to his parents, requesting the book to be sent to him and informing them of his progress (see *Letters* 3: 124, 130 and 140) and to Sidney Colvin (149). Menikoff explains that: 'Stevenson kept a working notebook during his projected history of the Highlands. This manuscript volume, now in the Huntingdon Library (HM, 35317), contains thirty-four pages of notes drawn from two major sources: Edmund Burt's *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to His Friend in London* and Colonel David Stewart's massive *Sketches of the*

image of the Highlands and suggests a growing readership towards the end of the century more interested in encountering a supposed ‘factual’ social study than romanticised fables.⁷ Like *Kidnapped*’s David, Burt documented his adventures in the Highlands and wrote accounts of those he met and the different customs he encountered. While the novel certainly contains elements of the mythologised Highlands and the honourable-savagery of the clan groups, *Kidnapped* is not solely a romance novel about romanticisation; this chapter links it to the revival of interest in familial forms in the late-nineteenth century. As an exploration of kinship forms, *Kidnapped* aligns itself with the subtle shift in interest in the clan family form in the nineteenth century, from tartan-clad, honourable-savages, to a more distanced (yet still romanticised), scientific interest in their culture and organisation.

Stevenson used this rediscovered interest in the clan form in particular to explore the role of outsiders ‘in’ familial relations. John L. Roberts writes that: ‘by the eighteenth century, the myth had arisen that the clan as a whole was descended from a common ancestor, given that “clan” in Gaelic means children or offspring’ (13). Their system of kinship relied upon the heirs of a distant progenitor maintaining a focal point around which clan groups formed. Clan ties, therefore, were not necessarily consanguineous, for as Roberts explains, beyond the elite clan gentry the outer echelons of clan society ‘rarely had any blood ties of kinship with the clan chief, merely taking his name when surnames came into common use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’ (13). T. M. Devine puts it even more bluntly, explaining that the history of ‘clan evolution makes nonsense of any claim that the

Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlands of Scotland’ (28). Throughout *Narrating Scotland* (2005) Menikoff draws on the influence of Burt’s *Letters*.

⁷ While first published in 1754, Burt’s final letter was written in 1737; the majority of *Letters* was written in the 1720s.

clans were united through ties of blood' (8).⁸ Even the distant ancestor which the clan claimed as their own had questionable ties to the group, yet these perceived blood-relations served their purpose by generating a simultaneously privileging and levelling effect:

The dominant families liked to trace their origin from a heroic figure in order to give prestige, status and legitimacy to their position while at the same time providing the ordinary clansmen with a common sense of identity with the elite. Most of these pedigrees were created and recreated with scant regard for historical accuracy. It was a pragmatic business designed to enhance family pride, accommodate changing alliances and absorb other clans. Among the common ancestors claimed by the MacGregors was Pope Gregory the Great while the Campbells included King Arthur among their 'name-fathers'. (7)

In *Catriona*, we witness the eponymous character explaining to David that: 'you should bear in mind that Prestongrange and James More, my father, are of the one blood. [...] One part may call themselves Grant, and one Macgregor, but they are still of the same clan. They are all the sons of Alpin' (291). *Catriona's* comment explicitly demonstrates the deliberate mistake of the clans' belief in blood kinship: More and Prestongrange do not bear the same name, but they descend from the same legendary ancestor and are therefore members of the same clan family. The clan chooses to believe in its blood relations: it is a kinship group which is *like* a consanguineous family. This mistaken belief that all were descended from a common, often mythical, ancestor thus 'strengthened the institution of clanship itself' (Roberts, 13-14) by flattering ordinary families into believing that the clan chief had a fatherly interest in them; the practice of fostering-out the chiefs' children

⁸ Devine explains that: 'The blood ties between the ruling families and the ordinary clansmen were largely mythical but the assumption of consanguinity, suggested in the very word *clann*, i.e. children, gave an emotional bond which helped to cement social cohesion within clanship. A clan therefore did not consist of those of the same kindred or surname, because surnames did not become at all common until the seventeenth century when clanship was already in decline. Rather it was made up of those who followed the same chief whatever their own lineage' (8-9).

to ordinary clan members extended this emotional bond of equality and loyalty.⁹

This group-structure also provided protection for both chief and clan, and secured large-scale allegiance to the group. The patriarchal clan system relied on a cyclical organisation of faithfulness from the chief's extended family members and, in return, protection from the clan chief: the clan, primarily a system of honour and duty rather than direct relations, was, as Devine explains, a pragmatic, practical consideration as well.

While the strength of the clan form itself was waning by the end of the eighteenth century, late-nineteenth century social sciences – and Stevenson – returned to the concept during a period of social reassessment. As we saw in the Introduction, the authority of the Victorian family was under question with the social and political changes of the period and the rise of anthropological studies which focused on past family and social forms in order to reveal more about existing states of kinship. In his quasi-anthropological essay about social forms and social origins, 'Totemism' (1887), J. G. Frazer linked the totem directly to clans: while the previous chapter considered the *fin-de-siècle* interpretation of totemism as clubland, this chapter looks at totems in their nineteenth century anthropological context. Of the three types of totem Frazer identified, the primary one, he claimed, was 'the clan totem, common to a whole clan, and passing by inheritance from generation to generation' (4); the term 'clan' was, by the late-nineteenth century, creeping into anthropological terminology for 'primitive' social groups, despite the fact that the

⁹ Roberts cites 'the widespread practice of fostering a chief's children upon his clansmen as a means of strengthening the bonds of kinship within the clan itself (15).

clans had been a prominent social force in the Highlands only a century before.¹⁰

This description, however, corresponds with the Scottish clan group and its belief in a single, common ancestor, whose closest relations inherit the position of chief. And, more importantly, Frazer went on to state that:

The clan totem is revered by a body of men and women who call themselves by the name of the totem, believe themselves to be of one blood, descendents of a common ancestor, and are bound together by common obligations to each other and by a common faith in the totem. Totemism is thus both a religious and a social system. In its religious aspect it consists of the relations of mutual respect and protection between a man and his totem; in its social aspect it consists of the relations of the clansmen to each other and to men of other clans. (4)

Totemic groups were seen to be non-consanguineous, yet they existed through a mutual decision to believe in their blood ties: the clan ‘believe themselves to be of one blood’, descended from a ‘common ancestor’, generating ‘relations of mutual respect and protection’. This lack of blood-relations, and the ensuing artificial system of faith and obligations, categorised the clan totem group as both a religious and a social group, creating both man-to-totem relations based around belief and respect, and man-to-man bonds of community. Here, kinship is not ‘family’ at all, in the consanguineous sense, and Frazer’s nineteenth-century perception of the totem transforms it into a further social medium, such as religion. These extended familial ties contrast sharply with the legally-upheld hereditary Lowland family relations running alongside – and interacting with – the clans after the ’45 more than a century earlier, which Stevenson also depicts in the Balfour family.

¹⁰ Frazer defined the three types of totem as: ‘(1) the clan totem, common to a whole clan, and passing by inheritance from generation to generation; (2) the sex totem, common either to all the males or to all the females of a tribe, to the exclusion in either case of the other sex; (3) the individual totem, belonging to a single individual and not passing to his descendants. Other kinds of totems exist and will be noticed, but they may perhaps be regarded as varieties of the clan totem’ (‘Totemism’, 4).

Stevenson's reflections on kinship become a part of this social studies discourse, and depict 'family' as a system of outsiders, connected through some common cause or purpose, rather than an innate relation. Yet while recent criticism of both *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* largely, and persuasively, focuses on the Lowland-Highland cultural divisions and exchanges, and the resultant vision of a divided Scotland, the topic of kinship has been overlooked.¹¹ Sophie Gilmartin links family ties themselves to the idea of nation, arguing that national identity stems from an awareness of our initial rooting of 'self' amidst our ancestors:

Because a family pedigree can be seen as the first element in an expanding series – pedigree, tribe (or region), race, nation (or: nation, race) – an individual's definition of self, his or her assertion of social existence, begins with the family tree. It is a first step in placing his or her identity in the context of the other elements in the series. (3)

When we take this into account, it is unsurprising that, amidst the fractured and unrelated family forms in *Kidnapped*, there is a similarly disjointed nation. This chapter takes a step back to focus on the 'first element' of these national identities and relations to consider the family as an unrelated social form. The reassessment of family relations in the late-nineteenth century, as *Kidnapped* demonstrates, reflects and interacts with the social sciences theories and investigations of the late-nineteenth century by focusing on the extra-familial. Stevenson's narrative does not depict a straightforward inheritance from father to son, but neither is it simply a rumination on the anxieties of paternal relations; it is rather a novel concerned with the problematic nature of both 'natural' and artificially-constructed familial ties,

¹¹ Reid explains that *Kidnapped* depicts a 'divided nation' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 126) and a 'rejection of the meliorist account of Scotland's progress towards enlightened modernity' (129). Gray considers *Kidnapped* in terms of Scottish national identity, and argues that the text demonstrates 'a Scottish identity divided against itself' (54). Alison Lumsden reinforces these views in her essay, 'Stevenson, Scott and Scottish History' (2010) (73). Oliver S. Buckton claims that: 'David's journey through the Highlands [...] is an opportunity to examine the stark differences between English and Highland culture' (127).

reflecting the tensions between nineteenth century social and anthropological studies and traditional Victorian beliefs in the authority of the family. *Kidnapped* questions what it means to ‘belong’ to a familial group and reveals that neither social form – the traditional family or the clans – are related through blood. The unfamiliar Balfour family are, in accordance with the depiction of the legal world of the Lowlands, dependent on property rather than innate relations; the Highland clans – an unrelated, quasi-familial group – are more family-like than the biological family itself. David is an outcast from both social forms: excluded from his family, and lacking an understanding of Highland culture, *Kidnapped* portrays his extra-familial adventures as a reassessment of the family form.

‘Natural’ laws and lost property

The title alone of *Kidnapped* presents us with an immediate family dilemma: our hero, David Balfour, has been deliberately removed from his family, and becomes one of the ‘unhappy innocents who were kidnapped or trepanned (as the word went) for private interest or vengeance’ (38). As such, David has not only been kidnapped physically, but metaphorically as well: he has been doubly removed from the family configuration, both in body and in his legal entitlement to Balfour family relations. Having been deliberately disinherited by his father, and not acknowledged by his Uncle, David both is and is not a member of his own family. Both forms of David’s kidnappings are abductions from his blood and legal entitlement to family: the adventures that David undergoes *are* his estrangement from his family form. In her study of kinship in the late-eighteenth century, *Novel Relations* (2004), which considers the transition from consanguineous to conjugal ties, Ruth Perry argues that:

‘[b]elonging to a family is never taken for granted or quietly subsumed as background for other adventures; being cast out of a family or taken into a family *is* the adventure in eighteenth-century novels’ (8). While *Kidnapped* also locates its family rupture at the start of the text, the problems of familial disjuncture remain central to the plot throughout: like Perry’s study of eighteenth century texts, *Kidnapped*’s depictions of familial cast-outs arguably are this novel’s adventure.

Left without kin following the death of his father, David begins *Kidnapped* in the midst of family rupture. But this does not mean that David is entirely cut off from the notion of family. Laura Peters points out that:

the orphan is not truly outside the narrative of domesticity: what appears as a binary relationship hides within itself the dark secret of its own ambivalence. When explored, this ambivalence reveals that the orphan is not a foreign invading threat but is actually produced by and hence is an essential component of the family itself. [...] The family, then, contains its opposite, in the figure of the orphan. (22-3)

As an orphan, David is the antithesis of ‘the family’, and by occupying this status he is a constant reminder of it, and exists in a liminal, not-family, zone. David represents the strangeness of the family form: he is a member of a non-existent family form; an outsider within the (deceased) family. This familial-exile of orphanhood is, in *Kidnapped*, presented through the physical abandonment that David encounters as a result of having no family home: the Lowland family in *Kidnapped* exists through property, and David’s position, as we will see, is one of un-homeliness. To be without family, David implies, is to be without place or purpose: ‘if I knew where I was going, or what was likely to become of me, I would tell you candidly. [...] My father and mother, since they are both dead, I shall be no nearer to in Essendean than in the Kingdom of Hungary’ (7-8). Like *Treasure Island*’s Jim Hawkins, David is surprisingly practical, and appears unconcerned at

the loss of his parents, and only worried at the change of location that this might bring; this, of course, is prior to his excitement at the discovery that he is to go to the House of Shaws.¹² David is not undergoing emotional, but physical disjuncture: to have no family is one thing, it seems, but to have no family home is far more disturbing. David's reconsideration of the legal structure which he had considered to be innate, hereditary, blood-family, and its links to property, is thus the primary focus of both *Kidnapped* and its sequel, *Catriona*.

Kidnapped displays the interrelation between nature and law in the family system in which David has been brought up: the family, which appears so natural from afar, is, in fact, a legally-upheld institution, reliant upon property. The aristocratic system of inheritance by the eldest son relies on both blood *and* legal institutions to oversee the practice. The movement from 'primitive' community kinship ties, such as the totem, to property, saw a shift towards monogamous kinship relations – deemed to be the beginnings of a modern family form – in order to pass on property to the correct heir; as *Kidnapped* displays this enclosed blood system is in fact completely dependent on the 'correct' inheritance of property through the system of primogeniture. And this reflects tensions about the relationship between family and property in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Friedrich Engels, for example, noted the evolution of the family towards property in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), arguing that family was not organic, but an artificial institution found in modern societies based around property

¹² Jim's father dies at the beginning of the novel, after which Jim is quickly distracted by his interest in Billy Bones. Sandison writes that: 'The actual death of the [father] is brushed aside with as little ceremony as Jim Hawkins shows towards the same event in *Treasure Island* and as little sense of bereavement. (The similarity is altogether striking). And just as Hawkins has, in Billy Bones, a ready surrogate for whom he shows more affection, so David finds one in Mr Campbell the minister' (*Appearance of Modernism*, 188).

ownership. Engels used Lewis H. Morgan's interpretation of society moving through three stages: savagery, barbarism and civilisation. This involved a movement from free sexual relations to monogamy, which Engels wrote initially 'arose from the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of a single individual – a man – and from the need to bequeath this wealth to the children of that man and of no other. For this purpose, the monogamy of the woman was required, not that of the man' (106). The privatisation of property, meanwhile, 'completed' the monogamous marriage form: 'when, with the preponderance of private over communal property and the interest in its bequeathal father right and monogamy gained supremacy, the dependence of marriages on economic considerations became complete' (110). Modern ideas of a natural – and even of a monogamous – family are entirely constructed around economic needs, as a result of the need for inheritance: the law becomes crucial to uphold this artificial institution. This view is evident in a similar manner in Stevenson's depiction of the commoditisation of the Shaws estate and its role in family relations: *Kidnapped*'s depiction of the House of Shaws, despite its eighteenth century setting, becomes a product of nineteenth century concerns about the role of property in the family, and the problems this causes for the legitimacy of 'family' itself.

Stevenson depicts the need for this legal moderating influence over apparently natural family ties in the corrupt Shaws estate: a property left in the wrong hands demonstrates the failure of the traditional family form. In a deal struck by his father and uncle, in order to make amends for the two brothers being in love with the same woman, they deliberately disrupt the family line by allowing David's father to marry if he surrenders his entitlement to the Shaws estate to his younger

brother (205-6). David's identity has been withheld from him in order to maintain the illegal transaction which took place between his father and uncle many years before: David has been intentionally, and unlawfully, disinherited in order to settle a family dispute and neither David nor his uncle know of each other's existence. David's position suggests that family relations can be disregarded or taken up at any opportunity, for they become tradable characteristics: David can be made an outsider in his own family as penance to Ebenezer. Ebenezer's deal with David's father demonstrates the demise of a family system based around blood relatives, for while David should naturally inherit the estate, he is unable to act to prove his blood relations until he has the law behind him. Both *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* accordingly end with news from his lawyer concerning his natural-legal entitlement.

Blood relations are clearly not enough for this 'natural', consanguineous family to work: at the very beginning of the text, *Kidnapped* thus proposes that family is not, in fact, dependent on innate ties. Wolfram Schmidgen explains that:

The 'Act Concerning Tailzies' [1685] strengthened the Scottish landholder's right to keep his property unalterably within the same family. It allowed for the entailment of land in strict familial perpetuity. The slightest alteration of the property – for example, the indenting of the land – immediately dispossessed the current holder and turned the property over to the next in line. (192-3).

Changes were made to the law in the seventeenth century to enforce the blood family and its use of property; that Ebenezer stands in the way of David's legally-enforced 'natural' inheritance weakens the legal and emotional bonds of 'family'. The legal role of the family has been deliberately overlooked, with the result that the family now stands in disarray. With neither blood nor law carrying enough weight to uphold the notion of family on their own, the two must act together. Blood and law become entwined, each bolstering the other's (lack of) authority and authenticity.

The kinship to which David is traditionally entitled through consanguineous ties, by both nature and law, is depicted as both oxymoronic and entirely interdependent, and *Kidnapped* portrays the resultant implosion of the blood family and the hereditary property through which it finds structure.

The dilapidation of the ‘house of Shaws’, of which David is rightful heir, demonstrates in no uncertain terms the fragility of the state of hereditary, blood-kinship: ‘the house itself appeared to be a kind of ruin; no road led up to it; no smoke arose from any of the chimneys; nor was there any semblance of a garden. My heart sank’ (14). Sandison explains that: ‘what he has arrived at is not a solid, prosperous family seat, sanctified by time and capable of confirming the authority and identity he has naively arrogated to himself, but appropriately enough, a half-built shell’ (*Appearance of Modernism*, 180-1). The stagnancy of the Shaws estate, which Ebenezer inhabits with no fire, showing no inclination to restore the smashed windows and crumbling ruins of the half-completed building (21), physically demonstrates David’s family line and its practical uses disintegrating before him: the visible sense of family and family ownership has disappeared, or even was never fully there in the first place.¹³ A coat of arms sits, appropriately, above a main entrance which has never been completed (15). With the revelation that the family is *not* organic, but dependent upon its property to maintain its form as an hereditary institution, the Shaws estate actually becomes akin to a form of totemic organisation. As a totemic emblem, binding the traditional family form, the deteriorating condition and misplaced ownership of the house comes to represent the failing blood kinship which it both upholds and is upheld by: Frazer documented the care with which the

¹³ See Schmidgen for the role of commodities and property in *eighteenth century* literature as visible definitions of the boundaries and the function of communities.

totem was treated by its followers, yet the actions of Ebenezer and David's father have reduced their estate, and thus their relations, to rubble.¹⁴

Ebenezer not only has David kidnapped, but he uses the unstable nature of the house in an attempt to kill him by asking David to fetch a chest of papers from the top of a flight of stairs which goes nowhere, fully of the knowledge that 'to set a stranger mounting it in darkness was to send him straight to his death' (30).

Representative of the Balfour family itself, and the family relations to which David is entitled, the house is now a danger to its members: the family is both dependent on it and threatened by it. The perceived innocence of the Victorian family home here contrasts sharply with Stevenson's depiction of wayward and decaying hereditary estates and miserly, secretive relatives, albeit set in the eighteenth century.

Kidnapped confirms a lingering Victorian suspicion that, far from the old adage of a castle, the family home harbours secrecy and deceit; it is an unhomely domestic form. Anthea Trodd explains that: 'The dominant image of the Victorian home is of a sanctuary, a firelit circle enclosed against the hostile and dangerous external world' (1), yet the success of mid-century fiction writers such as Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens suggested otherwise and pointed to a real concern about the virtue and authority of the consanguineous/conjugal family. Hidden family secrets involving illegitimate blood-kin and crime, as we have seen above in novels such as *East Lynne* (1861), and the blurring of public and private spheres with the arrival of the detective in *Bleak House* (1852-3) and *The Moonstone* (1868), for example, pointed towards an unstable and even dangerous family form; *Kidnapped* becomes a part of this

¹⁴ Frazer wrote that: 'Believing himself to be descended from, and therefore akin to, his totem, the savage naturally treats it with respect. If it is an animal he will not, as a rule, kill or eat it' ('Totemism', 8).

Victorian anxiety. Yet David aligns himself with a romantic Scottish literary tradition: his uncle's treachery is 'like some ballad I had heard folk singing, of a poor lad that was a rightful heir and a wicked kinsman that tried to keep him from his own' (26). To David, his outcast position is one of pure romance: this expulsion from his family, and the exposure of the true, legal, ties of family, is an adventure of which he is the hero, debunking the family form.

'Ye'll be no friend of his?': the clan family

When David first introduces himself to Alan, he feels the need to bolster his identity by revealing that he is of landowning lineage: "“David Balfour,” said I; and then thinking that a man with so fine a coat must like fine people, I added for the first time “of the Shaws”” (63). David has, of course, misread his counterpart, for in Alan's Highland communities, family and reputation is not dependent on property. Alan, instead, counters with his clan allegiance: ““My name is Stewart,” he said, drawing himself up. “Alan Breck, they call me. A king's name is good enough for me, though I bear it plain and have the name of no farm-midden to clap to the hind-end of it”” (63). Alan's 'name' is that of his clan, not his family estate, and, as he makes clear, loyalty to this name is all that he requires for his familial identity. That family structure is at stake at their very first meeting is important: primarily, *Kidnapped* is a text concerned with why and how social groups gather. Oliver S. Buckton states that: 'Alan Breck emerges as the key figure in the novel's historical plot, diverting the narrative away from its concern with inheritance and family and toward a complex engagement with Scotland's Jacobite history' (136). But in fact Alan does not lead us away from the issue of family; instead, he takes David on a tour of

Highland kinship forms, which also reveals how these groups have been affected in the aftermath of the '45. While, as we have seen, the clan form as a 'primitive' formation was the subject of both romanticisation and study in the nineteenth century – sometimes, even, both at the same time – the clans in *Kidnapped* are clear and organised about their allegiances and their motivations, despite the threat they are under. As Julia Reid explains: 'the narrative also undercuts the conventional nineteenth-century perception of the Highlands as a lawless wilderness. *Kidnapped* makes it clear that the clan system no less than Lowland culture enjoins a strict code of authority and order' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 128). *Kidnapped* depicts the organisation and loyalty that the clan form conjures, with the result that this unrelated, supposedly 'uncivilised', social form becomes more family-like than David's consanguineous Balfour family.

Alan, like David, is doubly cast out from his family form. As an exile living in France, and as a member of a clan – a kinship form which was not legally recognised by the crown – he, like David, is an outcast in his own country and in his own clan formation. And, what is more, the clans themselves were inclusive, yet extra-familial, social forms, as they did not depend on a consanguineous tie: the clan was a kinship group of outsiders. This lack of distinction between the 'related' and the 'unrelated' is a topic upon which *Kidnapped* dwells. Early in the novel, David, Lowlander and self-appointed social investigator, feels the need to 'translate' to his reading audience that the pub landlord's phrase, 'Ye'll be no friend of his?', means 'in the Scottish way, that I would be no relative' (42).¹⁵ Using instances of the words 'family' and 'friend' in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Naomi Tadmoor has

¹⁵ David is mistaken: this was not solely a Scottish mannerism; the *OED* cites use of the word 'friend' as 'kinsman' and 'near relations' in a variety of contexts, including by Shakespeare.

explained that ‘the words “family” and “friend” were used to denote both familial and extra-familial ties’ (301). The idea of ‘family’, this suggests, is a linguistic formation rather than a natural one. With this merger between the familial and the extra-familial, the clans denote an example of kinship which is beyond the traditional bounds of the consanguineous family. Posing problems for the very concept of ‘family’ itself, therefore, the Highland clans also display how unrelated kin can be *more* of a family than the blood family itself: family is not the stable, completed system which the Victorian domestic ideal suggested. Stevenson’s topsy-turvy portrayal of the family form suggests that artificial clan bonds are far more long-lasting and worthwhile than the property-reliant blood-family.

While the law is needed to uphold traditional rules of consanguineous inheritance, thus eradicating any supposedly ‘natural’ authority of blood, perceptions of the clan form underwent the opposite transition in the nineteenth century. While not recognised by law, clan groups were identified as organic structures through the ‘natural’ laws of exogamy by nineteenth century anthropologists. In contrast to the insular objectives of the legally-upheld traditional family of keeping wealth with the strongest blood line within the family to uphold the very family form itself, the totemic structure of the clan group was first considered as exogamous by John F. McLennan in *Primitive Marriage* (1865). In order to avoid the weaknesses associated with incest, McLennan argued that ‘primitive’ social groups performed ‘marriage by capture’ (xiii), gaining their female ‘property’ (20), and thus their kinship structure, from other totemic groups. McLennan explained that: ‘we may be sure that such a system could not have sprung out of the mere instinctive desire of savages to possess objects cherished by a foreign tribe; it must have had a deeper

source – to be sought for in their circumstances, their ideas of kinship, their tribal arrangements’ (20). Allan I. Macinnes notes a similar system of external marriage in the clans, which was created out of self-protection in order to maintain amicable relations with nearby clans, yet cites friendship, rather than conjugal marriage ties, as the most successful in this task (9). While the concept of a single-line blood family is weak enough to require legal enforcement, ‘primitive’ totemic groups, anthropologists claimed, sought to avoid the pitfalls of unmixed blood by looking outside of the group. *Kidnapped* performs the concerns of Victorian anthropological findings and portrays the fragility of blood-kin and the failure of a ‘natural’, consanguineous family. The clan, by contrast, is depicted as an honourable and strongly united group.

In *Kidnapped* clan loyalties, unlike the Balfour family bonds, are difficult to break, even through physical dispersal. In the aftermath of the ’45, during which the novel is set, clan groups across Scotland found their privileges and culture under threat. Government attempts to ‘civilise’ the clans which came out in support of the Jacobite rebels relied upon barbaric acts and, amidst murder and plunder, everyday clan groups were forced to disarm and wear Lowland clothes, and were subject to Highland clearances, all of which extended into the early nineteenth century. The removal of Highlanders from their land left townships, and sometimes entire islands, derelict, in order to dispel the psychology of clan loyalties through physical disjuncture. The clans were not even legally recognised as family forms, which left them as outsiders in their own country: to be considered ‘family’, as we have seen with the Balfours, some form of legal enforcement is required. This dispersal of clan groups had, Macinnes explains, largely succeeded by Charles’ death in 1788 (210);

accordingly, David's first encounter with a more immediate post-Rebellions Highlands is one of devastation and desolation. He describes people of varying scant attire and the 'great poverty' now that the clan chiefs do not keep an 'open house' (103).

Yet Stevenson also reveals the strength of artificial blood-kin. The clans which David encounters use a belief in their mutual, mythical blood ties to maintain their family-like bond. While the clan totem was, to nineteenth-century anthropologists, an 'organic' social form which relied on 'natural' exogamous laws, their apparent blood relations were, in fact, invented, just as *Kidnapped* reveals the 'natural' consanguineous family to be maintained by artificially-created laws. *Both* social organisations which Stevenson considers rely on an artificial principle. Totemic clans were not considered to be consanguineous groups, yet Frazer argued that the bond which was generated through devotion and obligation, which resulted from their belief in their blood-ties, was 'stronger than the bond of blood or family' (53). That the totemic clan can simulate bonds stronger than blood – more real than 'real' consanguineous relations – displays the unnatural characteristics of 'family' itself. While Stevenson depicts clan kinship in a far more favourable light than the pragmatic, legally-upheld consanguineous family, the fundamental familial lack which David's tour of kinship forms exposes corresponds with the increasing anxieties about social forms and social origins: *Kidnapped* reveals concerns about the very existence of 'family'.

While the traditional family form is easily dismantled – quite literally, as we have seen in the case of the Shaws estate – the clans remain bound by strong mythical ties. The clans' active belief in their system of mutual relations through

their mythical totemic ancestor leads to a sense of duty which maintains their kinship system and generates the 'reality' of its form and function. And these beliefs render the clan family what we could term a 'hyper-familial' formation. In his essay, 'Simulacra and Simulations' (1981/1994), Baudrillard traces the stages of the image towards hyperreality:

- 1 It is the reflection of a basic reality.
 - 2 It masks and perverts a basic reality.
 - 3 It masks the *absence* of a basic reality.
 - 4 It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
- (173)

The clan most immediately fulfils the third stage. Initially, the clan members' belief in their mutual relations and their family-like form masks the lack of consanguineous relations, the '*absence* of a basic reality' (173), by simulating the family form. Their bonds are, as Frazer suggested, *stronger* than blood: while this reveals that they are not a blood-related family, the social form they have created is more 'real' than this. The clan formation masks the absence of an innate relation between family members. And more than this, these strong bonds of the clan disguises the fact that there is no true origin of the clan family form. The clan, as we have seen above, depended on mythical ancestors, to whom it believed itself, as a group, to be related.¹⁶ It relies upon an initial relation which does not exist, and has never existed: the clan is 'the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal' (169). The clan bears no connection to a fixed system of relations: invested in myth, the group exists as simulacrum, '*The desert of the real itself*' (Baudrillard, 169). It is a reproduction of the supposed relations that the mythical ancestor bore to his family: a copy

¹⁶ Baudrillard claims that: 'When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity' (174). Baudrillard's hypothesis corresponds with the dependence of the clan upon a mutual, mythical ancestor, and with the return to myths of origin and 'primitive' social forms by anthropologists in the late-nineteenth century.

without origin. Yet now the clan exists, while its 'original', mythical relation does not. Just as Baudrillard suggests that the 'territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory' (169), it is now the clan form as an apparent 'reality' which precedes its mythical ancestry.

More real than 'real' biological family relations, the clan is, therefore, more family-like than the family itself: the clan bond is 'stronger than blood' – it performs a more 'natural' function than blood bonds. And this becomes evident throughout David's experiences of the Highland clans in *Kidnapped*. While David is bewildered by the legal obstacles that confront his accession to the House of Shaws, the clans are able to surmount similar obstructions to their kinship form. United through their apparent blood ties to their legendary totemic ancestor, Alpin, the Stewart clan generates both a cult of personality around its chief and inter-clan relations which enable the clan to defy the legal injunctions against them. Amidst the forced dispersal of the clans, Ardshiel, the chief, remains vital to his devoted Stewart followers, despite his exile. Alan explains that his role is to smuggle financial support for his leader out of the country:

[H]e that was all his life so great a man, and come of the blood and bearing the name of kings, is now brought down to live in a French town like a poor and private person. He that had four hundred swords at his whistle, I have seen, with these eyes of mine, buying butter in the market-place, and taking it home in a kale-leaf. This is not only a pain but a disgrace to us of his family and clan. [...] Now, the tenants of Appin have to pay a rent to King George; but their hearts are staunch, they are true to their chief; and what with love and a bit of pressure, and maybe a threat or two, the poor folk scrape up a second rent for Ardshiel. Well, David, I'm the hand that carries it. (81)

Despite having little themselves, members of the Stewart clan pay double rent in order to pacify the king and to maintain Ardshiel in his exile. That they do this out of 'love and a bit of pressure' displays the dual sense of brotherhood and duty which

the clan structure generates. The chief's welfare is more important than a clan member's own position, and despite his absence, Ardshiel retains his crucial central position.

While physically separating communities, the Highland Clearances and the ejection of clan groups do not, therefore, break the psychological bond of the clan to its chief: 'One thing they couldnae kill. That was the love the clansmen bore their chief. These guineas are the proof of it' (82). While the consanguineous family can be brought down through disinheritance, the clans have a stronger bond than the Balfours' blood ties, which remain bound up in legalities. Macinnes explains that: 'The primary value of clanship was protection. *Dion*/the protective ethos of clanship was personified in the chiefship, specifically in the designation of the chief as *ceann-cinnidh*/head of the kindred and was made manifest specifically by his bestowal of hospitality and generally by his patriarchal attitude towards his clan' (2). While the clan chief settles disputes and protects his clan at home, the mutual aspect of the religious system is also clear as the clan, in return, sustains Ardshiel while in hiding abroad. And, furthermore, the existence of a chief, to whom members believe they are related, provides individuals with a form of identity, as we will see in the following sections; it creates a system of relation for those who are not, in fact, related. In this kinship, members rely on the *concept* of a chief and a common ancestor, and by sustaining Ardshiel they also maintain the clan itself: real blood relations are entirely unnecessary and are simply simulated. David witnesses a similar system first-hand with the Vourich clan, of whom Cluny Macpherson is leader. While in hiding in 'Cluny's cage' (162), Cluny 'still exercised a patriarchal justice in his clan. Disputes were brought to him in his hiding-hole to be decided;

and the men of his country, who would have snapped their fingers at the Court of Session, laid aside revenge and paid down money at the bare word of this forfeited and hunted outlaw' (164). Clan relations prove to be stronger than any legal system that real consanguineous relations require to uphold their family and, indeed, stronger than blood relations themselves.

While not necessarily related by blood, therefore, this system of friendship becomes a family-like structure, in which any member can rely on another as if he was blood-kin. David muses that: 'Other folk keep a secret among two or three near friends, and somehow it leaks out; but among these clansmen, it is told to a whole countryside, and they will keep it for a century' (181); the familial relations deployed by the clan enable absolute trust and discretion, a phenomenon which we will witness further in the secret societies in *The Dynamiter* in Chapters 4 and 5. Alan benefits from this secrecy with his personal possessions kept in his absence by James Stewart (128), 'Ardshiel's half-brother' (81). Furthermore, he can rely on James's hospitality when fleeing the Campbells, despite the danger in which this places James and his family: 'If it falls on you, it falls on me that am your near kinsman and harboured ye while ye were in the country' (134). The loyalty and brotherhood between members of the clan protect each individual, as well as the group itself. Alan continues to rely on his kinsmen for protection and money throughout his flight following the Appin murder. Clan kinship presents a community of potentially unrelated people ready to treat a fellow-member as their brother, and as such their bond is greater than that of blood, as it is actively created and subscribed to: this apparent interrelation between 'friend' and 'family' is one of the dynamics which maintains the Highland group, and which *Kidnapped* suggests that the Victorian

family has forgotten – familial relations do not depend on blood, but, for the clans, at least, on sentiment.

David's adventures with the Highland clan groups are not, therefore, an attempt to rediscover his own family. In fact, he makes it clear that his observations are those of a distanced social scientist: the experience at Cluny's Cage does not provide David with intimate friendships, but the opportunity to observe. He comes away explaining that: 'Altogether, I had a fair chance to see some of the inner workings of a Highland clan' (164). His discoveries demonstrate the lack of necessity for blood-kinship and the importance of the idea of the *unrelated*: any group can create a belief in consanguineous ties, and function through the mutual respect which this should generate; the clan group is, in fact, 'stronger than blood'. Stevenson's text performs the tensions emerging between the importance of the 'natural' Victorian family and family home, and the interest in supposedly 'primitive', 'authentic' social groups such as the totem, using the distance of time and fiction to lessen the blow that family itself is an imposed idea. *Kidnapped* reveals family itself to be an 'unreal' concept through the imposition of other 'family' realities, such as the non-consanguineous totem clan group; there is no 'real' family for us to depend upon: 'It is no longer a question of imitation,' writes Baudrillard, 'nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself' (170). The clan creates familial relations out of mythical ancestry, and these relations are now more family-like – more 'natural' – than the blood family: their kinship form never existed as an 'original' in the first place. The clan is caught in a self-perpetuating cycle of hyperreality: 'A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any

distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference' (170). If an unrelated group can become more family-like than the blood-related family itself, the clans' very existence demonstrates that there is no such thing as 'family' either: all family forms are simulacrum; duplicates of an artificial, non-existent social system.

Alan's coat button

The bond which maintains this hyperreal family form is one of metonymy. The importance of the totemic figure or object to the clan group is documented throughout late-nineteenth century social science studies. Frazer recorded the prominent position in which it was held, with various groups refusing to eat or look at their totem animal or object from which they believed they were descended in order to maintain it and, accordingly, the clan group.¹⁷ Other groups deliberately ate their totem, presumably with the purpose of maintaining its role in their lives through physical consumption; they could physically become a part of their family group in this way. In the Scottish clan group the 'totem' which plays this role is the mythical human ancestor, such as the Stewarts' Alpin. The reliance of the clan on its totemic figure plays a key role in generating the clan group itself, as we have seen. But what is more, by containing a metonymic value for the clan, the totem both represents and becomes the group: while seemingly only a single (and mythical) ancestor of the group, its perceived relations with every clan member results in this one part of the clan standing for and upholding the whole group. Without the legendary Alpin, the

¹⁷ For example, Frazer explained that: 'The connection between a man and his totem is mutually beneficial; the totem protects the man, and the man shows his respect for the totem in various ways, by not killing it if it be an animal, and not cutting or gathering it if it be a plant' ('Totemism', 3-4). Lang documented the same concept with examples in *The Secret of the Totem* (125). These taboos, he claimed, led to the idea of totemic exogamy (140).

Stewarts believe, there would be no Stewart clan. Clan social structures are thus reinforced by metonymic relations, which prove to be both pragmatic and open to abuse.

Elements of the clans' relations can be explained through the metonymic aspects of Frazer's study of 'primitive' magic, *The Golden Bough* (1890), which he expanded upon under the title of 'Contagious Magic' in the 1911 third edition of the book. The natural law which this magic assumes is that 'whatever [the magician] does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed a part of his body or not' (3rd ed, 1: 52). Frazer's history of religious and social groups initially portrayed the man-god: a magician figure, who, reliant on a mistaken association of ideas and an inflated sense of self-importance, believes he can control all around him. The account Frazer gave of 'the most familiar example of Contagious Magic' was: 'the magical sympathy which is supposed to exist between a man and any severed portion of his person, as his hair or nails; so that whoever gets possession of human hair or nails may work at his will, at any distance, upon the person from whom they were cut' (1: 175). 'Primitive' society, Frazer argued, revolved around the 'natural law' of the belief that a part of the human body, for example, could stand for its entirety: Frazer's theory advanced the idea of metonymy as a basis for social existence. And this mistaken notion that man has control over himself *and* the world around him is also present in Stevenson's depiction of the clan form.

David's very survival is dependent on the conscious use of contagious magic by Alan's clan. After displaying his loyalty to Alan, following the siege of the roundhouse, David is presented with a button from his much-prided coat: "I had

them,” says he, “from my father, Duncan Stewart; and now I give ye one of them to be a keepsake for last night’s work. And wherever ye go and show that button, the friends of Alan Breck will come around you” (73). The button symbolises Alan’s identity through his own relation to his father, its previous owner: ancestral knowledge is crucial in this clan system. And more than just a token of thanks, this button comes to serve as a passport into Stewart protection. In severing it from his coat, Alan undertakes no light task: representative of himself, the button could now be used for mischief should David betray him. While Frazer noted the belief that a part of the body could be used ‘at any distance’ (45) against its original owner, Alan’s button runs a similar risk to his clan. As a part of Alan’s attire, the button comes to stand for the man himself and, separate from its owner, it still possesses his authority. David’s possession of Alan’s button symbolises David’s loyalty to the Stewarts and thus gains help for David as if he was Alan himself; the Stewart clan, meanwhile, can remain safe in their knowledge that David is not a threat. David shows the button to the suspicious Neil at Loch Aline, who immediately states that: ‘if ye are the lad with the silver button, all is well, and I have the word to see that ye come safe’ (110-11). The button helps to maintain the clan structure by serving as a visible reminder of its owner, a clan member.

Yet the clan itself, in making use of contagious magic, becomes a similar structure, reliant on metonymic relations. Connected through the totemic social system which we explored earlier in this chapter, the clan becomes so interdependent that members themselves ‘become’ the clan. Their belief that they are all related is, of course, a deliberate ‘mistake’, yet the social structure from which they derive this belief generates a system stronger than blood-family, and more family-like than the

family itself. As a part of the clan ‘body’, therefore, a member’s individual actions come to represent and affect the state of the clan itself, and vice versa. The myth of blood relations deployed by belief in the totem figure is similar to a contagious magic working within the clan; an erroneous sympathy which is assumed to occur between an individual member, cut off from its group, and the entire clan itself; the mistake of the ‘all for one’ sentiment. While *The Golden Bough* displays the mistaken perceptions of a society about its role and its existence, *Kidnapped* reveals the uses behind such dynamics.

Alan’s life, for example, is entirely dominated by the needs of his clan; he spends his time travelling between his leader in France and the clan members in Scotland, in order to sustain his chief’s position as leader. As a result, his own identity is betrothed to Ardshiel and the Stewart clan: we saw above the respect with which the Stewart clan view Ardshiel, even in exile. Despite the poverty in which their chief now lives, Alan explains that: ‘This is not only a pain but a disgrace to us of his family and clan’ (81). The lowly status of their leader does not alter their opinion of him and instead reflects upon the entire group. Menikoff explains that: ‘so much of clan loyalty depended upon a definition of the individual within a social context. The self was not the center of all being but a rod connected to the hub of the wheel’ (56). This wheel rotates around the protection of the clan chief and, therefore, the group itself, from hostile clans and government forces: while a single member is so connected to his kin that his actions can affect and represent the entire clan, the clan also comes to define the lives of its members.

Even the clansmen of the lowlands – the odd assortment of clan members in the legal profession – remain bound by this sentiment. This cluster of inbetweeners

presides over Scottish life on behalf of the Crown: as clansmen inhabiting the Lowlands, this group dominates the legal world. An unruly mix of Highland clan loyalties and British law, the justice exercised by these men is dubious. Caught between two conflicting systems, the advocates are, however, in an awkward position.¹⁸ Representing both the king's legal system of supposed justice – one which, of course, did not even recognise the clan as a form of kinship – and tied to the needs of their clan, the clansmen of the legal world must balance their profession with the, often conflicting, requirements of their familial group: they operate both inside and outside of their clan. Charles Stewart the Writer, who finds his duty to his Highland clansmen difficult to reconcile with his life as a city-dwelling lawyer, explains that:

I'm Hieland born, and when the clan pipes, who but me has to dance? The clan and the name, that goes by all. It's just what you said yourself; my father learned it to me, and a bonny trade I have of it. Treason and traitors, and the smuggling of them out and in; and the French recruiting, weary fall it! and the smuggling through of the recruits; and their please—a sorrow of their pleas! Here have I been moving one for young Ardshiel, my cousin; claimed the estate under the marriage contract—a forfeited estate! I told them it was nonsense: muckle they cared! And there was I cocking behind a yadvocate that liked the business as little as myself, for it was fair run to the pair of us—a black mark, *disaffected*, branded on our hurdies like folks' names upon their kye! And what can I do? I'm a Stewart, ye see, and must fend for my clan and family. (*Catriona*, 229-30)

Bound to the loyalties which he shares as a clan member, Charles is the puppet of his group: 'when the clan pipes, who but me has to dance?' As both a lawyer and a Stewart, his duty is to provide whatever help he can to his kin, no matter what the

¹⁸ Stevenson also depicts the tensions – and interrelations – between family and law in *Weir of Hermiston* (1896). Lord Weir, the 'hanging judge', banishes his son, Archie, to the rural Lowland borders for speaking out against the death sentence. The implications of the unfinished novel are that Lord Weir's faithfulness to the letter of the law leads him to sentence Archie to death for a crime he did not commit. Like Lord Adam Weir, *Kidnapped*'s Prestongrange is one of the few who manages to shake off the duties of his clan and puts his legal duties above any family relations he can claim; family is a tool used for pragmatic purposes: his daughters, for example, are used as bait for David's silence.

consequences to his own position; Charles is very clear that his kinship ties come before himself as an individual and that he 'is' a group: '[t]he clan and the name, that goes by all'. Charles's identity as a member of his clan comes before his own individual identity. Despite the 'black mark' that accompanies Charles' involvement with the 'nonsense' Stewart case, he must 'fend for my clan and family'. As Frazer noted, the clan bond was stronger than blood, and Charles suggests that he may be the next metonymic casualty of his clan: '[i]t's been always my opinion that I would hang in a tow for this family of mine' (236). Charles exemplifies the in-between state which Edinburgh's lawyers occupy, between clan loyalties and legal duty; Charles errs more towards his clan.

The 'one-for-all' dynamic of the clan group is, however, equally open to use by the outer world. In *Kidnapped*, this kinship form is used as punishment by opposing clans: the metonymic elements of clan relations enable warring clans to function in the Highlands as well. While Charles is worried that he may become a scapegoat for the actions of his clan, the Campbells (under the influence of the Crown) select the innocent James Stewart from the body of the Stewart clan as their victim, due to his many previous dalliances with their clan and the law; his individual execution stands for the revenge of both the Campbells and the Crown against the entire Stewart clan. In a similar manner to Frazer's magician, who is able to use a severed limb to manipulate the body, the Campbells enact their retribution on the Stewarts through James Stewart: the clan structure brings such possibilities upon itself. The metonymic value of clan members can, therefore, stand against them. Yet the entirely artificial sense of familial identity which this instils within each individual generates a stronger bond than that which we see in the Balfours, for

example, whose members are entirely disposable, and who can simply be replaced by the next in line to the family seat.

The ‘one-for-all’ sentiment was fuelled and encouraged by the government’s own attitude to the outlawed concept of clans: the metonymic kinship which clans offer also became a practical means of control. Menikoff explains that:

that system—indeed, the very principle of clanship—was never fully recognized by Scottish law, which preferred to use the clans as an instrument for the preservation of law and order rather than cede to them any legal authority. For their part, the clans simply disregarded the law of Scotland and utilized their own laws based upon their own custom, which differed considerably in areas like marriage and land tenure. And since revenge was a common motive for clan violence, feuds in the Highlands were endemic and seemingly uncontrollable. Therefore, the government came to view clans as societies that were collectively responsible for the acts of their members.
(86)

Clans were, problematically, kept outside of the law to maintain ‘law and order’ within Highland social structures. And, while remaining outside of the law, the clans were still subjected to punishments by the judicial system. By using the clans as self-governing tools, the government give the appearance of permitting a certain amount of autonomy and liberties – the Campbells, for example, held considerable sway and royal favour – while actually casting a watchful eye over events in the Highlands. With the frequent feuds which characterised the Highlands it was thus easier for the clan as a whole to be culpable for its members actions, and for individual members to be punished on behalf of the clan.

By associating human social form with individual acts of crime or self-sacrifice the clan group points towards a ‘mistaken’ notion of communal behaviour itself and the seemingly ‘natural’ relations which bind its members. Social existence, and the dynamics which maintain it, the clans in *Kidnapped* suggest, is all one big deliberate mistake. All social congregation, *Kidnapped* suggests, is artificially

imposed and becomes a belief system, for the purposes of government and protection. And this means that the individual and the cast-out become bound up in the idea of community: David cannot prove his identity until he has demonstrated his legal ‘right’ to family – he needs this legal manifestation of ‘family’ to prove his own existence; and unrelated clan members, through bonds of metonymy, are also fundamentally connected to their group configuration.

Chiefless Folks: The Braes of Balquidder

To be an outsider from these already cast-out clan groups is, therefore, to be at considerable risk. Yet *Kidnapped* continues to distance us yet further from the Victorian (Lowland) family form, and also portrays the remnants of the dispersed clan formations. With individual identity bound up in the actions and beliefs of one’s clan, both the clan group and the individual depend upon each other’s actions for their own existence and identity. Yet what is more, stray clan members who become permanently severed from their group find themselves removed from their method of self-definition. And the more individuals who leave or are forced to leave a clan group, the weaker the clan itself, which relies on the bonds of its members, becomes. Despite being a social system of ‘friends’, in the word’s dual sense, the clan group and its members are entirely bound up with one another.

We witness one example of this metonymic problem in David’s encounter with Robin. Amidst the Highland clan emphasis on loyalty and ancestral legends, David’s lack of knowledge about his own family immediately stands out. When questioned by Robin about his descent, David is humiliated by his apparent lack of kin: ‘I knew no more of my descent than any cadger’s dog; my uncle, to be sure, had

prated of some of our high connections, but nothing to the present purpose; and there was nothing left me but that bitter disgrace of owning that I could not tell' (182-3). Incapable of identifying his own family, David is, to Robin, unable to pinpoint his own identity. Burt's *Letters* explains the huge shame in being without a chief, the indication being that a clan member cannot have a sense of self without knowledge of his 'family'.¹⁹ Robin, accordingly, deems David to be 'only some kinless loon that didn't know his own father' (183). To be kinless in this metonymic world is to face severe questions of self-identity: David is evidently an outsider from the Highlands, as he has no allegiance to a clan. Menikoff writes that:

The clan name was at the heart of one's identity. To be deprived of that name was equivalent to being deprived of one's family. One fought for one's clan, for one's name, before one fought for any cause. [...] Thus, to know your clan's name, or rather to herald your patronymic, was not to be boastful but rather to reflect your pride in your father, your family, and your clan. (98)

David has not only been kidnapped from his lawful family through his abduction by Ebenezer, therefore, but also from knowledge of his ancestry which has been deliberately withheld from him; as a result, he has been hijacked from his own sense of identity. As a 'kinless loon', David is an outcast, especially amongst the clan formations which, despite not depending on innate kinship ties, rely on a sentiment of kinship and a loyalty to a chief, which David has proven himself incapable of demonstrating. Such is the structure of the clans that, by knowing David's clan allegiance, Robin would also be able to know something of David's own beliefs and identity.

And early in his adventures, David encounters a clan in the midst of deportation to America. This is the aftermath of the '45, and the clan is another

¹⁹ Burt recounted the inability to 'Name your Chief' as the deepest shame, and the cause of battles to regain a sense of honour (2:221).

victim of the Highland Clearances. The clans are now, like David, outcasts in their own country: David even describes the people he sees as ‘exiles’ (110). Their familial identity is being withheld from them; not by envious family members, like David, but by the government’s dispersal of their family form. He describes the Maclean clan’s lamentations to sound ‘from all sides like a lament for the dying’ (*Kidnapped*, 110). This is a clan who have been forcibly separated from their home, from each other – many of their ‘near friends’ remain on the shore (110) – and from their chief. With the clan dispersed, these members are not merely exiles, however, for they have lost their entire identity. They are not simply upset at leaving, but grieving the loss of their clan kin: their songs are like mourning songs for the dying. Without their clan identity, the individuals who are betrothed to their group lose their sense of selves.

There is a similar problem in the Braes of Balquidder: here, kinless men roam and the security and sense of self gained from clan membership is absent. Accordingly, Balquidder is depicted as wayward and dangerous: to knock on a door here, David explains, is ‘no very safe enterprise’ (180), for without a clan identity, who knows what kind of people are to be encountered here. The sense of menace with which this village is associated is never defined, except to explain that the inhabitants are without their clan:

No great clan held rule there; it was filled and disputed by small septs, and broken remnants, and what they call ‘chiefless folks’, driven into the wild country about the springs of Forth and Teith by the advance of the Campbells. Here were Stewarts and Maclarens, which came to the same thing, for the Maclarens followed Alan’s chief in war, and made but one clan with Appin. Here, too, were many of that old, proscribed, nameless, red-headed clan of the Macgregors. They had always been ill considered, and now worse than ever, having credit with no side or party in the whole country of Scotland. (180)

The dishonour of Balquidder lies with its inhabitants being without a chief. Without kin or allegiance through which they can be defined, these folk are thus considered troublemakers and suspicious. Yet the most specific that David's description becomes is to claim that they 'had always been ill-considered'; incapable of participating in clan kinship himself, he is unable to pinpoint the metonymic values upon which the clan system relies. As a home to those who have lost any association with the 'body' of their clan, the Braes of Balquidder are like a graveyard; as Menikoff puts it, 'the remains of a [clan] system that has fallen apart' (92). The Clearances and disputes between warring clans have here resulted in a band of wraiths, all suspicious of each other, yet destined to share the same stretch of land: Balquidder is home to a group of outsiders, and has, as a result, become a new community in itself. If a member can be a form of metonymic representation of the clan, the fall and dispersal of a clan group leaves the individual as no-body, without self; the inhabitants of Balquidder have lost themselves to their failed clan groups, and now retreat to a meaningless existence amongst similar exiles.

Reid links David's own familial estrangement to his sympathies with the Highland clans: 'David is affiliated with these outlaws and exiles by parallel dispossessions – his uncle's appropriation of David's inheritance and his kidnapping to be sold into slavery in the Carolinas' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 128). And both have also lost their identity through their loss of family relations, on which they depend: David's derive from his family's legal ties; the clans' from their metonymic relations. In both systems, kinship is crucial to existence as an individual. Yet both also find some reprieve in others who have similar problems: as Reid suggests, David shares a sense of exile with the disbanded

clans. He is, therefore, not fully cast out – entirely removed from social forms – himself. The kinless folk of Balquidder have formed a network of outsiders: while this is considered a murky and dangerous existence, there remains a sense of community, and David claims that his ‘presence was known before I left to all the people in Balquidder and the adjacent parts; many coming about the house on visits and these (after the custom of the country) spreading the news among their neighbours’ (181). That the residents of Balquidder have ‘neighbours’ suggests that these outlaws are not entirely alone; they have inverted the exclusivity of kinship to create a society of their own, a concept which we will consider further in the following chapter, which considers tabooed communities in Stevenson’s South Pacific writings. That David feels most at home in the Highlands is, as Reid states, the result of their similar circumstances as outsiders: they are ‘foreigner[s] at home’, as Reid’s chapter which highlights this point is entitled (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 111-37). Amidst the ‘kinless folk’, David, and the dispersed clan formations, find ‘meaning’ through a kinship of outsiders: even exiles are a part of a kinship formation.

‘I come into my kingdom’

Family in *Kidnapped* is dependent on external influences, be these property and the law, or a *lack* of blood kin: the family, in its various forms, is shown not to be related in any ‘natural’ way after all, and David experiences this first-hand through his kidnapping(s). Yet by seeing David’s return journey south to Edinburgh simply as an historical, teleological movement from ‘primitive’ communality to ‘modern’ property and monetary exchange, Stephen Shapiro comments on David’s ‘historical

amnesia' as he returns from his Highland friendships to Edinburgh to claim his family inheritance through legal channels:

Balfour's progress back to the Lowlands enacts what is made to seem a teleological momentum toward contractual, rather than communal, property rights. But the lad's safe passage through this geographized history comes only as Balfour can display the non-commodified fetish of Breck's silver coat button, which the latter gave him as a token that will invoke the benefits of Breck's roots, the out-moded clan loyalties, blood feuds, and oral compacts. But just as neatly as Breck brushes off the remaining cut threads from his coat, Balfour submits the traces of this civilization to the same kind of historical amnesia that he blithely displays (to the Highlanders' horror) about his own family background. Balfour's erasure of this personal past means that he will look to secure his inheritance through the English State's court-machinery rather than Scottish tribal honor. (132-3)

While David's return to his lawyer at the end of both *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* to regain his rights to entail could be perceived as a conservative ending for a text which undermines the authority of the concept of family and reveals David's affinity with his Highland compatriots, it is, in fact, quite the reverse. As an outsider in the Highlands, David returns to the familiarity of Edinburgh as soon as he is able to, and Jenni Calder argues that: 'It is clear from the last chapters of *Kidnapped*, and reinforced by *Catriona*, where David needs a guide to make his fruitless ride to Inveraray, that the Highlands will remain alien territory to David as he makes his way in the professional world of Scotland's capital' ('Figures in a Landscape', 129). Of course, David, prudish right to the end, does not up and leave to join a clan, and remains tied to the Balfour family despite finding closer friends in the Highlands than in relatives such as his Uncle Ebenezer.

But nor do his actions enforce the model of an organic family form. As Shapiro's comment above inadvertently points out, David needs the law to prove his identity and his right to inherit the Shaws estate; he cannot 'be' without it, as he is unable to prove his existence or his relations to Ebenezer on his own. It is his use of

a lawyer, rather than his eventual, and entirely predictable, return to the concept of blood kin, which is important. The family cannot function without the presence of a lawyer, and until this moment, the Shaws estate remains in the wrong hands: without the law, David remains an outsider within his own family. In returning to his lawyer, David demonstrates the fragility, not the authority, of the Lowland family. It is the legal world which possesses the authority behind this family form, and it is also this world which does not recognise the clan form. By coming ‘into [his] kingdom’ (212), and returning to the Lowlands and to his legal position as heir to the Shaws estate, David in fact acknowledges the importance of extra-familial influences within the family: more than simply blood is involved in family relations, as his encounters with the clans has suggested. While Reid states that Alan and David ‘part on unequal terms: Alan is an exile, David welcomed into the Whig establishment by the solicitor Rankeillor’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 129-20), this is, therefore, not quite the case. David’s adventures have debunked the Lowland social structure on which he depends, as has his return to Rankeillor: both adventurers part as exiles, within their family configurations at least.

In *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, paternal inheritance, therefore, proves to be surprisingly unsatisfactory. In *Reading for the Plot* (1984) Peter Brooks writes that: ‘the question of fathers and sons [is] perhaps the dominant thematic and structural concern and shaping force in the nineteenth-century novel, ultimately perhaps constituting a theme and a structure incorporate with the very nature of the novel as we know it’ (307). Brooks likens paternal relations to narrative form: ‘Is coherent understanding, the explanatory narrative plotted from origin to endpoint, possible and transmissible? Do the sons inherit from the fathers, do they stand in structured

and significant relation to an inheritance which informs the present?’ (308). A satisfactory ending to the novel, Brooks suggests, is one in which father-son relations are coherent and resolved; a problematic paternal line suggests difficulties with narrative structure itself: the question of father-son relations are crucial to the form of the novel. *Kidnapped* does not fit in to this tradition of the novel and instead corresponds with social tensions emerging at the end of the nineteenth century concerning external influences on the family form. Ebenezer’s death finally leaves David without any relations, and exactly as he wishes to be; once more, there is no regret at the death of his relative and, rid of the burden of blood relatives, David is free to enjoy his wealth without distraction: ironically, he finally becomes a legally-recognised member of his family and Laird of Shaws when he has no family left. *Kidnapped* displays the alternatives to the traditional blood-family and ultimately returns David to a ‘natural’ kinship form which has been undermined and exposed to be artificially imposed. David’s adventures reveal that all family relations are extra-familial, and he must, quite fittingly, travel outside of his own family form and encounter the friend-family clan ties to discover this and to assume his own position within his family.

The kinship relations in *Kidnapped* reveal problems with both the Lowlanders’ mercantile vision of family and the vulnerable loyalties of the communal clan system: as Calder explains, ‘[t]his country and climate are hostile to Highlander and Lowlander alike’ (‘Figures in a Landscape’, 129). Both depend on an abstract, even imagined, idea – belief in blood relations; the law – to bind them together. With this, as opposed to an innate form of kinship, revealed to be the basis of nation, *Kidnapped* is the depiction of a ‘national tragedy’, as Alison Lumsden and

others suggest ('Stevenson, Scott and Scottish History', 72).²⁰ David, a Lowlander, is an exile in his own country through a lack of cultural understanding of the Highlands, and even a cast-out in his own family, which leads him to discover that it is an artificial kinship form after all; the clans, which create a myth of blood relations and which are not recognised by the law as a family form, are groups of outlaws, one of whom is Alan Breck. Yet it should also be noted that both characters overcome these obstacles: despite being an outsider, David gains the trust of the clans, while still remaining rooted in Lowland legal principles, and the clans adapt to Lowland ways by gaining employment and continuing their loyalties across cultural, and even national, divides. Despite their gradual disintegration, which the execution of James Stewart and the loners of the Braes of Balquidder display, the clans are fluid and motivated; they pay rents, travel to France, defend themselves amidst inter-clan warfare and maintain a strong bond of loyalty across a large group of members, not all of whom are related: it is the family-like form of the clans, as opposed to the stagnancy and lengthy stalemate of the Shaws estate, which represents a form of modernity. And, as we have seen, the unrelated clans form a more familial kinship than the legally recognised family, which calls into question the very nature of family and family membership. With legally-enforced family members revealed to be 'related' only through property and the cast-out clans loyal to their family-like

²⁰ Lumsden explains that modern criticism distinguishes Stevenson from Scott through the 'lack of historical process or progress' in his works, which err instead towards 'national tragedy' (72). Lumsden argues that both *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae* 'support these readings of Stevenson's response to Scottish history as one that is essentially tragic and divided' (73). Calder considers Scott and *Kidnapped* in relation to the landscape, concluding that Stevenson's protagonists 'remind us just how readily time and change estrange us from both the landscape and the past. Alan Breck lives in exile and will never again scramble through the heather. Nor will David' ('Figures in a Landscape', 132). Reid claims that: 'Despite its picturesque credentials, then, *Kidnapped* is a bleak novel, charting the often frustrated attempts of the hero, an exile in his own country, to understand an alien culture, and undercutting the meliorist account of Scotland's gradual progress towards civilized modernity' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 131).

relatives, Scotland is revealed to be a nation of outsiders. And it is this consistency – this shared exile – which forms a community in itself: *Kidnapped* reveals the inherent strangeness of the Scottish social configuration.²¹

²¹ Ian Bell's biography of Stevenson is one of many studies which considers Stevenson's position as a continual exile. He notes that 'Scotland's exiles have always defined their nation' (14); it is difficult to sever Scots from their country entirely, he suggests: 'A Scot, always, that was part of it. He never did escape. He took his identity with him and made a dream of exile' (282). Bell's biography is written from the perspective of the conflicts between home and exile in Stevenson's life.

3. Inside-Out: island communities, exclusion and taboo

They say it scares a man to be alone. No such thing. What scares him in the dark or the high bush is that he can't make sure, and there might be an army at his elbow. What scares him worst is to be right in the midst of a crowd, and have no guess of what they're driving at.

Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892)

'Boundaries,' writes Gillian Beer, 'both topographical and genetic, underpin kinship (acknowledged, constructed, repudiated)' (39). Kinship depends on a clear notion of who is both inside and outside the group. Yet this boundary, and the enclosed/exposed space of the community which it signifies, is itself formed through the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The communal space both denotes and is created by the division between those whom it includes and excludes: kinship is caught in a self-reflexive process. Alienation from a group, therefore, is not a conclusive separation: segregation is *required* to create community boundaries; and community boundaries are required to indicate a distinct community itself. Those who are alienated from a group are, problematically, fundamentally bound up in the idea of kinship. The role of the outsider is just as important to any community as that of the insider: to form a discrete social group, someone always has to be excluded; this is a key feature of kinship, as all of the groups in this thesis suggest. It is by leaving someone outside of the group that it can be recognised as just this – a group. The boundary then, which Beer recognises as crucial to kinship, must be transgressed or have the potential to be transgressed, in order to distinguish its existence *as* a boundary, as we will see in this chapter: to serve its purpose, the border line must be recognisably breakable and there must remain the potential for individuals to be cast out from the group. And what is more, what, exactly, this

boundary is – societal laws and taboos; consanguineous relations; the physical demarcation of an island – does not matter; it is the existence of the boundary itself, as constituted by existence of the insider and the outsider (of which distinction the existence of the boundary creates), which is important. The existence of the outsider – or the potential for the existence of outsiders – is a crucial element of kinship.

We can see this in different ways in Stevenson's South Pacific writings and the island communities they depict. While *Kidnapped* provided us with a tour of Highland kinship communities, Stevenson's interest in kinship forms takes an ethnographical and anthropological twist during his Pacific travels, and most notably in his short story, 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892). Julia Reid claims that: 'David's tour of the Highlands prefigure[s] Stevenson's self-conscious performance of the rôle of ethnographer in the South Seas' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 126). Both, she suggests, are now outsiders within a community of 'Others'; both David and Stevenson seek to study and understand the, seemingly 'primitive', kinship systems in which they now exist. And it is in this position of 'outsider' that Wiltshire, the protagonist of 'The Beach of Falesá', also finds himself. We have seen the lack of innate connections required in the extra-familial relations in *Kidnapped* and how blood relations are not a guarantee of family; this chapter departs from the Highlands to take the idea of exile a step further and focus solely on the excluded and the outsider's role in creating such kinship forms, from the fitting distance of the South Pacific islands.

That 'The Beach of Falesá', like *Kidnapped*, is told from the perspective of the excluded – both David and Wiltshire look in on the incomprehensible kinship system in which they find themselves – not only demonstrates a nagging need to

understand social group forms within Stevenson's work, but acknowledges the crucial, but often overlooked, importance of the outsider to the formation of a community. As outsiders, Stevenson and his two protagonists are not solely ethnographers or anthropologists looking in on a community; they are also, as this chapter will argue, central to the very concept of kinship itself. Kinship is not solely reliant on close-knit family-style ties and inclusivity; it depends upon exclusivity as well. This chapter takes familial relations in their most distant state, as a kinship community not of blood, but of those who share the same culture and laws. By considering such groups, we can see the importance of exclusion to kinship systems, both in terms of the outsider, isolated or cast off from the group, and the anthropological concept of 'taboo', which is a kinship system based on the idea of prohibition. Exclusivity, of course, comes at the price of exclusion and isolation, as Stevenson's writings in the South Pacific clearly suggest.

In *Primitive Culture* (1871), E. B. Tylor considered the role of, what he termed, 'survivals', in anthropological studies. 'Survivals', he claimed, were 'processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved' (1:15). Certain societies, he suggested, had adopted the habits of 'primitive' societies, from which they had never progressed: Tylor suggested that society was on a teleological, evolutionist movement from 'savagery' to 'civilisation'.

This hypothetical primitive condition corresponds in a considerable degree to that of modern savage tribes, who, in spite of their difference and distance, have in common certain elements of civilization, which seem remains of an earlier state of the human race at large. If this hypothesis be true, then,

notwithstanding the continual interference of degeneration, the main tendency of culture from primæval up to modern times has been from savagery towards civilization. (1:19)

To Tylor, the existence of modern ‘savage’ communities suggested two things: firstly, that they were survivals of an ancient social system, and secondly, that they were evidence of an evolutionist movement from ‘primitive’ communities to modern, ‘civilised’ ones. As such, these communities were considered to be like museum relics: surviving artefacts of previous social systems, which could tell us about early stages of society.

This concept of survivals is clear in Stevenson’s anthropological writings during his travels in the South Pacific.¹ Stevenson continued the notion that contemporary communities in the South Seas were ‘survivals’ of a bygone age; so ancient, it seems, that a comparable system could only be found by those such as *Kidnapped*’s David in the clans of historic – and ‘primitive’ – Scotland. The social form of the Scottish Highlands, which we saw to function through the idea of exile in the previous chapter, was seen by Stevenson to be analogous to the Pacific island communities he encountered. In a well-known passage in his quasi-anthropological work, *In the South Seas* (1896), Stevenson described his role as the Tusitala, which was his method of swapping tales to gain further insight into island life: stories are located within an economy of exchange, used to satisfy his hunger for local knowledge:

When I desired any detail of savage custom, or of superstitious belief, I cast back in the story of my fathers, and fished for what I wanted with some trait of equal barbarism: [...] what I knew of the Cluny Macphersons, or the

¹ Reid explains that: ‘References to Darwin, E. B. Tylor, and Spencer appear throughout his notebooks and letters, and evolutionist rhetoric informs his essays on literary appreciation and creativity’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 4). Furthermore, Reid suggests that *In the South Seas* also ‘often seems to endorse Tylor’s belief that modern “savages” were survivals from an earlier evolutionary stage’ (143).

Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me to understand, about the *Tevas* of Tahiti. The native was no longer ashamed, his sense of kinship grew warmer, and his lips were opened. It is this sense of kinship that the traveller must rouse and share; or he had better content himself with travels from the blue bed to the brown. (13-14)

A problematic extract in many ways (Stevenson's alignment of the Pacific with an historic, 'barbaric' Scotland; the sense of 'shame' depicted in the island's inhabitants; the need to select carefully the story which is to be exchanged in order to produce the desired response; the manipulated 'sense of kinship' which Stevenson creates), this passage nonetheless locates Stevenson very clearly as the outsider, in search of information.² Arriving as a newcomer in the South Seas, Stevenson recognises his own position as traveller-intruder and the necessity to work to be accepted by the indigenous community and to participate in and understand its seemingly indecipherable, secretive culture and customs: like David, whom we saw in the previous chapter trying to understand the Highland clan forms, Stevenson is an outsider attempting to identify with the South Pacific island societies. Yet to Stevenson, these communities are not so indecipherable after all: as a Scotsman he, of course, had knowledge of 'equal barbarism' which came from the Highland clans. Presented as a form of bait, Stevenson claims that his tales of Scottish communities thus loosen the tongues of his subjects, who can, he presumes, relate to such 'primitive' kinship systems: this, Roslyn Jolly explains, was his use of the "Highland comparison" to help him understand and communicate with the Pacific islanders he met on his travels' (*Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific*, 35). Through

² Caroline McCracken-Flesher suggests that, in his travel writings, Stevenson purposely presented himself as an outsider: 'Stevenson places himself outside, using a distinct language of exploration' (91). In his travel writings, she argues, Stevenson 'realign[s] self and other, and even self *as* other' (101). McCracken-Flesher suggests that Stevenson deliberately distanced himself from the places in which he found himself to experience them fully. J. C. Furnas considers Stevenson as a persistent outsider and traces his voluntary exiles, which he links to his health problems, in 'Stevenson and Exile' (1981).

this informal system, ‘primitive’ Scotland could be compared to the present-day islands in the South Pacific. Stevenson, the outsider, positions himself alongside the figure of the non-assimilated, all-assessing detective, in search of not only acceptance, but of island knowledge and the keys to the community in which he finds himself; like the detective, he is intruding on communities who, perhaps, do not seek this invasion of privacy. Now the ‘Other’ amongst communities in the Pacific, Stevenson’s presence reveals a boundary between the kinship group and those whom it has excluded, and it is this border that Stevenson is trying to breach.

It is this figure of the outsider, set apart from a seemingly inclusive community, yet somehow crucial to the kinship group, which is the focus of this chapter. In ‘The Beach of Falesá’, this individual appears in fictional form: Wiltshire, the lone South Seas trader, who has seemingly left any family he has for the male-dominated European trading groups of the Pacific, unlike Stevenson chooses not to make use of his own ‘inside’ knowledge, and arrives on Falesá expecting to be treated as ‘as a white man and a British subject’ (24). Like many literary island communities, Falesá is populated by a number of separate, but interacting, social groups:³ as well as its indigenous people, the island is home to European traders and it is a stop-off for missionaries working in the Pacific islands.⁴ Critics such as Reid have demonstrated that the multiple communities in ‘The Beach

³ The island in *The Tempest* (1610-11) is home to Prospero, Duke of Milan, and his daughter, as well as their slave, Caliban, and the King of Naples, his family and their jesters are shipwrecked on its shores; *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) depicts Crusoe stranded on an island of native cannibals and prisoners, of whom one, Friday, escapes and is ‘civilised’ and converted to Christianity; *The Coral Island* (1857) depicts three boy-adventurers fending off pirates, ‘savage’ natives and Christian converts; in *Treasure Island* (1883) Jim’s search for the island with the local squire and doctor leads him to encounter pirates and sailors.

⁴ Ann C. Colley explores missionary culture in the South Pacific in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (2004), and Rod Edmond considers the role of missionaries and traders in the Pacific in *Representing the South Pacific* (98-159).

of Falesá' provide a criticism of imperialism and of the culture that British expatriates attempt to impose on these island societies: towards the beginning of the story Wiltshire considers that it would be a 'strange thing if we came all this way and couldn't do what we pleased' (24) and Case's manipulation of the island's citizens and his instigation of fraudulent marriages indicate the scams inflicted upon the native population.⁵ Stevenson himself, in his 'Highland comparison', openly linked government domination of the Scottish Highlands, which was, of course, depicted in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, to the damage done by colonisation in the Pacific, which was the focus of his *South Seas Tales*. Just as the clans, in the aftermath of the '45, are shown to be losing the battle against the Highland clearances and the government's attempts to disperse them, the communities in the Pacific islands are portrayed in the midst of upheaval following the presence of a new, colonial, authority:

It was perhaps yet more important that I had enjoyed in my youth some knowledge of our Scots folk of the Highlands and the Islands. Not much beyond a century has passed since these were in the same convulsive and transitionary state as the Marquesans of to-day. In both cases an alien authority enforced, the clans disarmed, the chiefs deposed, new customs introduced, and chiefly that fashion of regarding money as the means and object of existence. (*In the South Seas*, 12)

The intrusion of those such as Case, Wiltshire and the missionaries on the island is also an attempt to impose an 'alien authority', as both religious denominations and

⁵ Reid suggests that "'The Beach of Falesá' uses its fictionalization of hybrid Pacific cultures to offer a more explicit critique of imperialism than is afforded by these folk tales ['The Bottle Imp' (1891) and 'The Isle of Voices' (1893)]' (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 151). Edmond states that 'The Beach of Falesá' and *The Wrecker* 'emphasize the sheer ugliness of colonial adventuring in the Pacific. It is based on greed (there is no redeeming idea) and results in exploitation and corruption' (*Representing the South Pacific*, 179). And, bypassing the 'Highland comparison' and the similarities between *Kidnapped* and Stevenson's South Pacific work, Patrick Bratlinger writes that: 'In *The Beach of Falesá* and *The Ebb Tide*, for example, Robert Louis Stevenson produced accounts of the contemporary results of empire quite at odds with his romances of historical adventure. His South Seas stories are as sceptical about the influence of white civilization on primitive societies as anything Conrad wrote' (39).

traders alike sought to reap the rewards of empire. However, just as the conclusion of *Kidnapped* points towards a new, rather than entirely derelict, form of Scottish community, ‘The Beach of Falesá’ suggests that: ‘Polynesian culture [...] will survive, not unchanged, and at great cost, but it nevertheless has a future in which neither European nor Polynesian will be quite the same’ (Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, 176). The ‘alien’ intruders, as we will see, cannot simply displace the local kinship system without a clear understanding of the culture in which they find themselves.

As well as providing a critique of colonialism, the collision of social groups on Falesá – as in *Kidnapped* – also becomes an exploration of how different societies function. While the purpose of both the trading community and the missionaries is to overcome the indigenous island group for their own commercial, empire-building ends, the island society proves to be strangely resilient to their efforts, and ‘The Beach of Falesá’ instead documents the intruding groups’ attempts to penetrate and to manipulate the secrets behind the community, and the community’s use of taboo to maintain social cohesion. This story therefore becomes a key example of Stevenson’s interest in why and how groups gather; while *Kidnapped* provided us with an ethnographic tour of the Highlands, ‘The Beach of Falesá’ is a quasi-anthropological consideration of alternative forms of kinship. Stevenson’s use of taboo and exclusion reveal the *limits* of kinship and the mechanics behind kinship groups: to be outside the group, as this chapter argues, is in fact to play a central role in the validation of a community. His Pacific writings portray kinship communities who are wary of – and yet, as we will see, very much dependent upon – the idea of the outsider.

These outsiders have been cast out for a reason – they have transgressed some form of social code of conduct or regulation. Wiltshire, for example, does not understand, or attempt to understand, the society in which he finds himself, and breaks rules without understanding their importance. Yet in doing this, the concept of the outsider becomes crucial to kinship: the idea of transgression in fact proves the existence of a boundary. Michel Foucault writes that transgression is ‘like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity’ (‘Preface to Transgression’, 61). Transgression does not represent a challenge to a boundary, but rather reveals its very existence: it is an affirmative act, as opposed to a destructive one.⁶ He explains: ‘The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows’ (60). Transgressive acts become crucial to communities to demonstrate the limits of the group; yet these supposed ‘limits’ have to be demonstrably surpassable in order to transgress them in the first place. Thus, in demonstrating transgression or even potential transgression, the outsider is not only cast out from the community, but his extradition conversely guarantees the community’s limits (which are, evidently, not all-encompassing). As Foucault states: ‘transgression forces the limit to face the fact

⁶ Nor is this a positive act, however: ‘Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being – affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time. But correspondingly, this affirmation contains nothing positive: no content can bind it, since, by definition, no limit can possibly restrict it. Perhaps it is simply an affirmation of division; but only in so far as division is not understood to mean a cutting gesture, or the establishment of a separation or the measuring of a distance, retaining in it only that which may designate the existence of difference’ (Foucault, ‘Preface to Transgression’, 61).

of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognise itself for the first time)’ (60): the transgression of a boundary reveals interdependence between that which it contains and that which it excludes; it reveals the excluded to be crucial to the idea of the included. The island society in ‘The Beach of Falesá’, which this chapter largely focuses on, relies on a system of ‘taboo’ to maintain law and order: those who transgress its codes of conduct are excluded from social interaction and, through this, define its bounds. While the South Pacific islands were at risk from European interference, as Stevenson suggested, the community also depends upon an idea of absence and exclusion – of those who are *not* in the group.

The following sections will consider the Victorian perceptions of taboo as a form of social organisation; its use put into practice in Falesá and real-life island communities that Stevenson visited; the manipulation of taboo as a political tool; as well as turning the tables to consider another major form of nineteenth century taboo and exclusion taking place and being documented in the South Pacific at this time – diseased trading islands and leper colonies. In ‘The Beach of Falesá’ we witness an entire community which is explicitly run through with the idea of exclusion; yet its social system somehow remains inexplicable to those whom it has cast out – whom, ironically, the island group depends on. Wiltshire, who, as quoted above, finds himself ‘in the midst of a crowd’ (15) which he does not know or understand, is thus both excluded from *and* central to the community: as the tabooed outsider he is unwittingly a fundamental part of the kinship system he attempts to understand, and by transgressing its codes he reveals the boundaries of the community, with himself firmly located beyond them. Exclusion, as this chapter will demonstrate, is crucial to

social organisation: it provides an example of social limits and the transgression of these bounds, and it elevates the status of the group by providing a sense of exclusivity and even secrecy.

‘[S]ome Polynesian Scotland Yard’: taboo as a system of kinship

James S. Grotstein writes that: ‘Taboo, along with the rites of totem, was the organizing principle governing societal customs and behaviour of primitive man. Antedating religion, it constituted the earliest group conscience and penal system’ (15). While we have considered the totem clan as an example of extra-familial relations in the previous chapter, this chapter looks at the exclusive elements of taboo, and its function as a form of social police force. The term ‘taboo’, or *tabu/tapu* originates in the regions of Polynesia and New Zealand, and is first recorded to have entered English use as an anthropological term in 1777 by Captain James Cook. Cook described a number of instances of taboo in his *Journal of a voyage round the world in the H.M.S. Endeavour 1768-1771*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites his explanation of ‘taboo’ meaning, in general, ‘forbidden’ (“taboo”, *OED*). The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s most general definition of taboo also considers the term in the context of prohibition, and contradiction:

Set apart for or consecrated to a special use or purpose; restricted to the use of a god, a king, priests or chiefs, while forbidden to general use; prohibited to a particular class (esp. to women), or to a particular person or persons; inviolable, sacred; forbidden, unlawful; also said of persons under a perpetual or temporary prohibition from certain actions, from food, or from contact with others. (“taboo”, *OED*)

The terms associated with ‘taboo’ range from sacred items or persons; to restriction and exclusion; to secrecy; and even to legal systems. All of these, however, point towards taboo as a custodian of both exclusivity and exclusion within a society: two

key elements of a kinship group. It is this suggestion that taboo, despite its broad scope, is crucial to the day-to-day functioning of society, which this section aims to address, by considering the definitions and purposes of taboo offered by nineteenth century commentators.

Signifying forbidden objects, actions or words, the system of taboo was a method of maintaining and protecting – and also defining – a community: taboo was a method of social control. Frazer, for example, traced taboo to the ‘magical’ stage of society,⁷ and to the protection of the man-god, as well as to the fear of incest; he described the dubious fortune of being a man-god by explaining that:

A king of this sort lives hedged in by a ceremonious etiquette, a network of prohibitions and observances, of which the intention is not to contribute to his dignity, much less to his comfort, but to restrain him from conduct which, by disturbing the harmony of nature, might involve himself, his people, and the universe in one common catastrophe. (*The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., 3: 8)

As a result, the man-god often met with a terrible fate in order to assist the succession of the next king. The double-edged nature of taboo is here very apparent: this is a social system which, on the one hand, ‘protects’ its kings (and thus its community) in every way possible, yet on the other hand, requires the immediate slaughter of an unsuccessful king for the benefit of the community. And what is more, taboo also stretches to ideas such as incest, and many more acts of supposed transgression – it reaches from deity to disgust.⁸ Frazer claimed that ‘savage’

⁷ Frazer took the example of incest, writing that: ‘We may conjecture that in its origin the belief was magical rather than religious; in other words, that the blight was at first supposed to be a direct consequence of the act itself rather than a punishment inflicted on the criminal by gods or spirits. Conceived as an unnatural union of the sexes, incest might be thought to subvert the regular processes of reproduction, and so to prevent the earth from yielding its fruits and to hinder animals and men from propagating their kinds. At a later time the anger of spiritual beings would naturally be invoked in order to give a religious sanction to the old taboo’ (*The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., 2: 116).

⁸ Freud argued that the earliest taboos involved the death of the totemic animal, and ‘incestuous wishes’ (17). These, he claimed, became taboo as they are the two things that humans most desired – taboo, he claims, is the earliest example of conscience: he writes of ‘a taboo sense of guilt, and

communities had no such binary opposition, and merged all ideas of danger into one: 'some of them we should call holy, others we might pronounce unclean and polluted. But the savage makes no such moral distinction between them; the conceptions of holiness and pollution are not yet differentiated in his mind. To him the common feature of all these persons is that they are dangerous and in danger [...]' (180-1). Taboo, to Frazer, was an imagined condition that, nonetheless, protected the social group.

Yet perhaps the most revealing explanation of the contrasting extremes of taboo falls just outside of the nineteenth century, in Sigmund Freud's psychosocial study, 'Totem and Taboo' (1913). According to Freud, taboo:

diverges in two contrary directions. To us it means, on the one hand, 'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean'. The converse of 'taboo' in Polynesian is '*noa*', which means 'common' or 'generally accessible'. Thus 'taboo' has about it a sense of something unapproachable, and it is principally expressed in prohibitions and restrictions. (18)

Seemingly an oxymoronic state, taboo straddles both the revered and the revolting; yet Freud's explanation of its binary opposition, *noa*, helps to clarify. If *noa* is 'generally accessible', taboo clearly is not: just as something dangerous or forbidden is restricted, so, of course, is something sacred – it is held apart from 'normal' society. Inherent to the concept of taboo, therefore, are the ideas of constraint, limits and transgression: taboo places a person or thing outside of the usually accepted limits of society; to transgress these limits leads to rejection from the group in the form of exclusion, illness or even death. What or where these limits are is impossible to say without the taboo, which helps to illuminate the boundaries: taboo,

continues, 'Taboo conscience is probably the earliest form in which the phenomenon of conscience is met with' (67).

which places certain things off-limits, in a backhanded way thus helps to define the limits of the community. Something which is not taboo is included within this form of kinship; something which is, is not. Taboo, a form of exclusion, is therefore crucial to communal form. A tabooed object is both respected and dangerous, and separated as a result of this: taboo thus navigates between the two extremes to become essential to the everyday functioning of the community as a whole, single unit, and to the validity of the group as a discrete whole.

Nonetheless, to European commentators, taboo remained an incomprehensible, superstitious practice, which held no specific purpose. As late as 1913 we can see Freud, despite his illuminating definition of the term and analysis of its origins, perpetuating this view that taboo is more of an unwitting psychological state than a system with any specific purpose:

What we are concerned with, then, is a number of prohibitions to which these primitive races are subjected. Every sort of thing is forbidden; but they have no idea why, and it does not occur to them to raise the question. On the contrary, they submit to the prohibitions as though they were a matter of course and feel convinced that any violation of them will be automatically met by the direst punishment. (21)

Earlier in 'Totem and Taboo' he acknowledged the confusion which taboo causes for the outsider, but settled on the idea that the communities using such a system are passive and merely take it 'as a matter of course' (18). For Freud, taboo is something that is not understood even by an insider to the group, but it is nonetheless accepted: it is a solely superstitious, psychological state, which carries no logical purpose – whether intended or not – and which Freud linked to the symptoms of neurosis in his patients. This view is also visible in the writings of earlier commentators and travellers, such as Herman Melville: *Typee* (1846), which

Stevenson had read, describes many instances of taboo including the possibility of being tabooed without knowing what for.⁹

While living amongst communities in the Pacific, Stevenson also recognised the problem that outsiders had in understanding the true function of taboo, but argued that to suggest that it was a pointless form of prohibition was unjust:

It will be observed with surprise that [...] these *tapus* are for thoroughly sensible ends. With surprise, I say, because the nature of that institution is much misunderstood in Europe. It is taken usually in the sense of a meaningless or wanton prohibition, such as that which to-day prevents women in some countries from smoking, or yesterday prevented any one in Scotland from taking a walk on Sunday. The error is no less natural than it is unjust. The Polynesians have not been trained in the bracing, practical thought of ancient Rome; with them the idea of law has not been disengaged from that of morals or propriety; so that *tapu* has to cover the whole field, and implies indifferently that an act is criminal, immoral, against sound public policy, unbecoming or (as we say) 'not in good form.' (*In the South Seas*, 39)

Here, Stevenson compares taboo, a seemingly 'primitive' concept, to the Roman legal practices which now formed the bases of societies such as that found in Britain. The outsider, he argues, cannot understand the concept due to a different way of thinking about legal practices. In her study, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific* (2009), Jolly explains Stevenson's use of 'comparative jurisprudence' to understand

⁹ Rod Edmond writes that: 'During his first visit to San Francisco in 1879-80 Stevenson met the Pacific traveller-writer Charles Warren Stoddard, who fascinated him with accounts of his travels and introduced him to the work of Melville' (*Representing the South Pacific*, 160). In a letter to Sidney Colvin, for example, Fanny Stevenson asks him to 'suppose Herman Melville had given us his theories as to the Polynesian language and the probable good or evil results of the missionary influence instead of *Omoo* and *Typee*' (*Letters* 6: 304).

Amongst the many musings on taboo in *Typee*, Melville wrote of its incomprehensibility: So strange and complex in its arrangements is this remarkable system, that I have in several cases met with individuals who, after residing for years among the islands in the Pacific, and acquiring a considerable knowledge of the language, have nevertheless been altogether unable to give any satisfactory account of its operations. Situated as I was in the Typee valley, I perceived every hour the effects of this all-controlling power, without in the least comprehending it. Those effects were, indeed, wide-spread and universal, pervading the most important as well as the minutest transactions of life. The savage, in short, lives in the continual observance of its dictates, which guide and control every action of his being. (261) Newcomers to the island find the system incomprehensible, while it is clear that taboo is a system by which all islanders live and which regulates behaviour.

Pacific cultures: ‘the recognition of legal processes and institutions in alien guises’ (44). This, she argues, was learnt from Henry Maine’s study of *Ancient Law* (1861), which recognised that ‘primitive’ people were not lawless, but rather argued that they represented the ‘infancy of the race’ (*Ancient Law*, 3) as a social form and the beginnings of a law which maintains this. Roman law, Maine argued, was not the be all and end all of legal practices: while it had colonised ‘European’ thought – and Scottish law in particular – communities in the Pacific, therefore, would still have this legal inclination, made manifest through other social systems and customs. As another form of the ‘Highland comparison’, Stevenson’s comparison of Roman society with that of the South Pacific was also a reference to Scottish law, which, as Jolly explains, ‘was more closely affiliated with Roman (Civil) law than with English (Common) law’ (37). While Scotland used a form of Roman law to maintain its social order, therefore, in the case of some communities the same outcome could be reached through systems such as taboo.

Thus, the Pacific communities in which Stevenson found himself enabled him to carry out research ‘to discover “what men might be” who had never been subjected to the influence of the Roman Empire’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific*, 36), which Jolly argues was his aim.¹⁰ As Stevenson recognises in the quote above from *In the South Seas* (1896), while taboo was apparently a superstitious practice on the surface, it in fact functions in far more complex ways as a form of police force: an upholder of the ‘law’. With all members of a community respecting

¹⁰ Stevenson parodies the futility of ‘Roman’ knowledge in ‘The Ebb-Tide’, in which Herrick’s copy of a Virgil text is useless amidst the trade and languages in the Pacific: ‘Certainly, if money could have been raised upon the book, Robert Herrick would long ago have sacrificed that last possession; but the demand for literature, which is so marked a feature in some parts of the South Seas, extends not so far as the dead tongues; and the Virgil, which he could not exchange against a meal, had often consoled him in his hunger’ (124).

and believing in the sacred/dangerous aspects of taboo and not knowing what or who exactly ‘creates’ such a condition, its apparent omnipotence serves to punish those who stray, and to prevent others from doing so. This legal structure is a system which all members of the community have chosen to believe in; it does not need an authoritative voice to enable it to function: the knowledge that taboo (and thus the possibility of transgression) ‘exists’ is enough to create a form of discipline; it both sets and enforces limits. Taboo thus provides an example of what and who is not permitted within a certain society, and through doing so, demonstrates what or who is.

Like the organisation of the apparently ‘primitive’ clans in *Kidnapped*, which we saw Reid explain function around ‘a strict code of authority and order’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 128), Stevenson recognised that communities in the South Pacific were run through a strict adherence to a legal structure: Jolly explains that, ‘[f]or a European observer in the nineteenth-century Pacific, this meant overcoming the prejudice that “savagery” was a condition of lawlessness’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific*, 44). This idea of taboo as an upholder of a tacit law is evident in the examples Stevenson gives of its use in *In the South Seas*. He notes instances of taboo used in a methodical, calculating manner:

Doubtless the belief is strong; doubtless, with this weakly and fanciful race, it is in many cases strong enough to kill; it should be strong indeed in those who *tapu* their trees secretly, so that they may detect a depredator by his sickness. Or, perhaps, we should understand the idea of the hidden *tapu* otherwise, as a politic device to spread uneasiness and extort confessions: so that, when a man is ailing, he shall ransack his brain for any possible offence, and send at once for any proprietor whose rights he has invaded. ‘Had you hidden a *tapu*?’ we may conceive him asking; and I cannot imagine the proprietor gainsaying it; and this is perhaps the strangest feature of the system – that it should be regarded from without with such a mental and implicit awe, and, when examined from within, should present so many apparent evidences of design. (41-2)

As a superstitious form which is believed in so strongly that it can cause illness and death, taboo takes on an almost magical quality through the strength of the community's faith in it. In fact, Stevenson explained that the belief in taboo could be so strong that it could occasion death: 'We read in Dr. Campbell's *Poenamo* of a New Zealand girl, who was foolishly told that she had eaten a *tapu* yam, and who instantly sickened, and died in the two days of simple terror' (*In the South Seas*, 42). Indeed, Frazer also commented in *The Golden Bough*, that: 'The danger [...] is not less real because it is imaginary; imagination acts upon man as really as does gravitation, and may kill him as certainly as a dose of prussic acid' (3rd ed., 3: 224). In these situations, belief and imagination are so strong that they create their own reality. And as a result of this communal fear and reverence of a tabooed object, the system can usefully take on the form of a political or legal device, which can not only prevent criminal or immoral activity, but encourage those who have committed such crimes to confess. Illness, for example, is linked to some prior action committed against an out-of-bounds object. By tabooing a person or object – placing it out of reach and marking it as prohibited, excluded, banned – social law and order can be maintained. Yet most interestingly, Stevenson acknowledges taboo to be a manipulative and manipulated system, a Machiavellian, 'politic device' – an idea which we will encounter in 'The Beach of Falesá'. From outside, a society functioning through taboo appears to be illogical and mysterious; yet from within, the system is very evidently accepted and believed in as a method of controlling the group, akin to the Roman legal system around which Scottish laws and society are based. Taboo laws are unexplained restrictions and exclusions – to those who do not understand this as a system of kinship it appears illogical and impenetrable.

In the previous chapter I also considered the link between the law – specifically, property and entailment laws – and kinship groups, which is evident in *Kidnapped*. Lowland conceptualisations of family, the chapter suggested, and blood relations are intertwined with legal processes and property ownership: blood-family and the law become interdependent, leaving any claims to a ‘natural’ family form redundant. Kinship requires some form of legal enforcement to help it to function. That kinship depends upon a legal system which regulates relations within the community is also evident in communities which use the system of taboo. And what is more, in *In the South Seas*, Stevenson again notes the relationship between kinship and law; specifically, between the island law of taboo and the rights of property ownership:

But the *tapu* is more often the instrument of wise and needful restrictions. We have seen it as the organ of paternal government. It serves besides to enforce, in the rare case of some one wishing to enforce them, rights of private property. Thus a man, weary of the coming and going of Marquesan visitors, *tapu*'s his door; and to this day you may see the palm-branch signal, even as our great-grandfathers saw the peeled wand before a Highland inn. (40)

As well as a method of enforcing the community's laws, taboo can be a method of enforcing privacy: it enables people to put property ownership into practice by preventing others from visiting and by marking the property as a personal, individual possession. While, as we saw in the previous chapter, Engels had argued that the Victorian family was an artificial form found in societies with a focus on property and possession, it is evident that other kinship devices such as taboo could be used pragmatically to organise societies in the Pacific as well. Taboo can prohibit members of the community from touching or accessing a certain object, thus

imposing rights of ownership: once more, exclusion enforces certain limits of society – in this case, possession.

With the system of taboo functioning in a similar way to Scottish laws, therefore, the two societies are not so dissimilar after all: both are artificially controlled through laws and restrictions which make it clear who is acting in a way that is acceptable to the community, and who is not. It is an inability to think beyond the Roman system, Stevenson implies, which shrouds Pacific island communities in secrecy and superstition to the onlooker: this distance and exclusion from systems such as taboo is self-created. Yet by marking an object or action as both ‘sacred’ and ‘dangerous’, taboo creates a kinship form structured around the ‘legal system’ of prohibition. Taboo as a superstition can be manipulated into a system of social order and control: as Stevenson noted, ‘even if it were not originally invented, its details have plainly been arranged by the authorities of some Polynesian Scotland Yard’ (*In the South Seas*, 42). Entwined with a sense of omnipotence, taboo thus upholds the community’s laws to regulate the group, while also providing the group with a form of clarity: it both polices and highlights that which is off-limits, beyond the group. Taboo creates a form of ‘Other’, against which a kinship group can be defined.

Taboo, secrecy and the incitement to discourse

It is worthwhile here to pause and consider the non-anthropological uses of the term ‘taboo’ as a tool of social exclusion and manipulation which began in this period, as the term infiltrated Victorian culture. While taboo was used in its anthropological sense from the eighteenth century onwards, the term has been used figuratively since

the early nineteenth century.¹¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first figurative use of ‘taboo’ to 1826, and this particular example could not be further from the Polynesian use. In ‘The Touchy Lady’, which was a sketch in *Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Society*, Mary Russell Mitford wrote that ‘The mention of her neighbours is evidently *taboo*, since [...] she is in a state of affront with nine-tenths of them, her own family are also *taboo* for the same reason’ (2:62-3). Mitford brought the term ‘taboo’ to domestic disputes in rural England. Philip Thody notes that such commonplace use of the term ‘taboo’ demonstrates how far it had come from its superstitious meaning (3). Topics which were considered distasteful or undesirable were deemed ‘taboo’: they were not to be spoken of, expelled from polite society. Stevenson himself even used the term, for he lightly commented that he had been tabooed by the Germans, who would not respond to him, for writing letters to *The Times* about German expansion in the South Pacific (*Letters* 7: 216-7). Through such a system, taboo topics could be monitored or controlled: by seemingly placing them outside of discourse, distasteful topics could apparently be expelled and order restored. Yet Michel Foucault’s widely-cited argument states that, in fact, the concept of taboo became central to discourse in Victorian Britain: just as the anthropological form of taboo in the Pacific generates a

¹¹ Philip Thody, however, states that: ‘One of the first examples of this extended use took place in 1791, less than eight years after Captain Cook had first introduced the word, when the House of Commons considered adopting “a plain declaration that the topick of France is *tabooed* or forbidden ground to Mr Burke”. As early as November 1790, Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* had predicted that descent of that then unhappy country first into chaos and then into tyranny. However, he had also acquired the nickname of “the dinner bell”, a term which denoted a speaker so boring that his colleagues left the chamber of the House of Commons for the dining-room the moment he rose to speak. He was, in particular, becoming so obsessive on the subject of France that a total ban was necessary to protect his colleagues against what they saw as his misplaced eloquence. The early use of the word “taboo” in a context which evokes primarily a breach of good manners, in the sense that a gentleman does everything possible to avoid laying himself open to the charge of being a bore, suggests how far the term had already moved away from its original associations with magic and superstition and into those of the social and political life of Western Europe and North America’ (2-3).

social group functioning around the idea of exclusion, British society was also regulated by the concept of taboo and a form of omission. While, as we have seen, there are parallels between taboo as a legal system in the Pacific and the Roman law of Europe, taboo as a method of exclusion was also a system which characterised Victorian society itself. A further version of the system that Stevenson recognised to be controlling the Pacific was also, therefore, controlling home soils as well: taboo in *In the South Seas* and 'The Beach of Falesá' becomes not only useful as a comparison between two different kinds of legal/kinship systems, but as a distanced reflection on the very 'primitive' superstition that governed Victorian society as well.

Freud had linked the anthropological idea of taboo to a human 'categorical imperative' (22), claiming that: 'the taboos of the savage Polynesians are after all not so remote from us as we were inclined to think at first, that the moral and conventional prohibitions by which we ourselves are governed may have some essential relationship with these primitive taboos and that an explanation of "taboo" might throw a light upon the obscure origin of our own "categorical imperative"' (22).¹² That which had previously been seen as an anthropological, 'primitive', psycho-social form of order, was now linked directly to Victorian society itself, and to non-rational acts of reasoning, such as obsession and neurosis. And Foucault situates nineteenth-century Britain itself, and the taboo that he argues characterises it, in the midst of a mania of categorising and 'fitting-in'; by the end of the period, however, and as depicted in the Pacific writings of Stevenson, this concern is distorted and it is the British subject himself – Wiltshire serves as a useful example –

¹² He continued: 'The most obvious and striking point of agreement between the obsessional prohibitions of neurotics and taboos is that these prohibitions are equally lacking in motive and equally puzzling in their origin. Having made their appearance at some unspecified moment, they are forcibly maintained by an irresistible fear. No external threat of punishment is required, for there is an internal certainty, a moral conviction, that any violation will lead to intolerable disaster' (26-7).

who has trouble fitting-in to ‘his own’ empire. Yet unlike Freud’s interpretation of taboo, Foucault sees Victorian uses of taboo to be extremely logical, and even political – similar, in this sense, to Stevenson’s recognition of the use of taboo as a legal system in the South Pacific islands. Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* (1976) explores Victorian uses of sex as ‘the secret’ (or ‘public secret’ – that which is known about, but not spoken of directly), which becomes a repository of all threats to social decency and order: taboo topics which cannot be discussed openly and are better excluded. Such ‘threats’ or taboos come from the social outsider or misfit: lunacy, homosexuality, sexual promiscuity and physical disability (such as the disfigurement caused by leprosy, which we shall consider below) are all located in the secret so that they can be controlled and discussed on more socially acceptable, and thus meaningless, terms. Through these systems of secrecy, the existence of the outsider is socially assessed, categorised and controlled.

However, Foucault argues that, instead of sex, ‘the secret’, undergoing ‘massive censorship, beginning with the verbal proprieties imposed by the Age of Reason, what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse’ (35). The secret is thus regulated: by encoding taboo in these discourses of secrecy, Foucault claims, governing bodies have more control over how and when such unruly and ill-fitting topics are discussed. Rather than preventing all mention of sex outright, prohibition therefore came in the form of new ways of speaking about it: Foucault argues that the Victorians were not the repressed beings they are traditionally viewed as and, in fact, through a variety of discourses, taboo topics such as sex were talked about all the time: ‘What is peculiar to modern societies,’ he writes, in a well-known quotation, ‘in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow

existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret*' (35). Foucault cites the examples of 'nervous disorders' in medicine, psychiatric categorisation of 'mental illnesses' of the Freudian generation, and even the legal system and crimes 'against nature' (30). By using such modes of discourse to speak about sex, it was simultaneously reinvested in secrecy: for Foucault, this secret is subject to constant revelation, just to keep it secret. Taboo subjects were thus regulated by their constant presence: Victorian society remained distant from such misfit topics by making them central to discourse. Taboo, a form of exclusion, was therefore central to Victorian society – just as it was to communities in the Pacific.

This Victorian mania for categorising¹³ is thus linked to an obsession with social organisation, and a form of kinship fuelled by 'public secrecy' was evident throughout both nineteenth century British and Pacific society. This proximity between Victorian and supposedly 'savage' taboo was evidently a concern at this time – Stevenson's acquaintance Grant Allen also recognised the link between the Victorian, figurative use of taboo and taboos in the Pacific in his novel, *The Great Taboo* (1890), explaining that: '[t]aboos, after all, are much the same in England as in Boupari' (280).¹⁴ Reid considers this to undermine the unsettling nature of

¹³ Seen, most visibly, in the mass-categorisation and display of artefacts and inventions in Great Exhibition (1851), and also in aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis and the 'mental illness' categories imposed on sex, which Foucault relates in *The History of Sexuality* (36).

¹⁴ Stevenson's short story, 'Something in It' (1896), also recognises that taboos exist everywhere: a missionary discovers that the locals' stories of broken taboos are true – in this case, the warning is of 'the house of yellow reeds tied with black sinnet, [...] anyone who touched it became instantly the prey of Akaānga, and was handed on to him by Miru the ruddy, and hocused with the kava of the dead, and baked in the ovens and eaten by the eaters of the dead' (255). Despite the existence of such a world proving the missionary's beliefs to be untrue, he remains fixed to his own taboos, and refuses to drink the kava:

'What!' cried the convert. 'Are you going to respect a taboo at a time like this? And you were always so opposed to taboos when you were alive!'

'To other people's.' said the missionary. 'Never to my own.'

comparisons between ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ society: ‘as Allen links a decorous English prohibition of unsupervised contact between young men and women with Polynesian taboos involving cannibalism and “horrible bloodthirsty rites”, the comparison is amusing rather than disturbing’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 148). Yet the important point is that taboo is a method of social control in both communities, no matter how ‘serious’ or ‘primitive’ the taboo is considered to be. As Reid suggests, British taboo is also a ‘prohibition’, and when we consider this in terms of kinship it becomes clear that the two societies both depend upon the idea of exclusion to generate ‘inclusivity’ – for those deemed suitable.

Taboo thus exists at the very limits of society and of kinship: it serves to both exclude people from the group and paradoxically, through doing so, to enforce the ‘boundaries’ of the community and of what is acceptable within it. As a result, the concept becomes crucial to kinship – taboo occupies the precarious position of highlighting the boundaries of a group while also remaining central to it, all by being excluded: Foucault’s interpretation, of course, claims that the secret undergoes constant revelation, just to keep it secret, and South Pacific taboos create exclusions which become crucial to the form of the community. In the following section we will see Wiltshire, in ‘The Beach of Falesá’, demonstrate this in his Pacific community by unwittingly transgressing its codes. Like the anthropological interpretation of taboo, Victorian society used taboo to mark out its range – of what

‘But yours have all proved wrong,’ said the convert. (256-7)

The tale demonstrates the widespread existence of taboo in both the South Pacific and Europe, as well as the inflexibility of European taboos – the missionary will not break his own taboo, but happily breaks the indigenous peoples’ – and is still spared from the ovens at the end.

and who was not acceptable within its confines, and thus what and who was, by branding it unspeakable and secretive.

‘They haven’t any real government or any real law’: the outsider and transgression

Taboo, therefore, is a social system of exclusion through which the South Pacific islander *and* the European finds definition and validity. Despite creating the appearance of having cast out an idea or individual, both in fact position the excluded as a fundamental part of the community. This system was, as we have seen, at work on home soil as well as abroad, functioning as a kind of social police force: Victorian society also operated around a system of exclusion. Those who are excluded, therefore, become crucial to kinship: Wiltshire, the outsider in ‘The Beach of Falesá’, plays a central role in his new community, without even realising it. The island of Falesá, on which he is a copra trader, of course provides physical limits to its community – surrounded by sea, there is a very evident boundary. Yet the actual limits of the group are revealed and generated by taboo and exclusion. Wiltshire is twice-excluded in ‘The Beach of Falesá’, for he is an outsider (along with fellow-trader Case) on an island populated by an indigenous community, and he is also excluded by the community itself in the form of taboo. Both serve to create and enforce kinship boundaries.

Despite coming from a Victorian culture which, as we have seen, was ruled by taboos and restrictions, Wiltshire arrives on the island with the attitude that any island laws are mere superstitions. In fact, he arrives on Falesá having recently left another island community, where he was subject to the same laws of taboo:

I was sick for white neighbours after my four years at the line, which I always counted years of prison; getting tabooed, and going down to the Speak House to see and get it taken off; buying gin and going on a break, and then repenting; sitting in the house at night with the lamp for company; or walking on the beach and wondering what kind of a fool to call myself for being where I was. (4-5)

Wiltshire evidently has not learnt from his previous island experience. Taboo, to him, is an incomprehensible and pointless restriction, which is solved by simply having it ‘taken off’, rather than reforming his behaviour to be in line with the rest of the island – he is unable to see its pragmatic uses and the boundaries that taboo reveals. Wiltshire, therefore, finds life in the Pacific to be needlessly restrictive and lonely: only white neighbours could improve the situation, he believes; in greater numbers they would, presumably, have more chance of imposing a sense of British superiority upon the indigenous population. His later experience in Falesá, therefore, is something of a repetition, yet this time with the European trader, Case, for company: on waking up one day to discover a taboo looming over him, they both set about trying to discover the reason behind it, and to have it removed.

Wiltshire, of course, has in fact been tricked into (illegally) marrying the seemingly undesirable Uma, by his co-trader Case. Uma and her family, it turns out, have existed under a taboo long before Wiltshire’s arrival on the island: the narrative of ‘The Beach of Falesá’ is entirely dependent on a taboo which was imposed well before the tale starts:

It seems, before that, Uma and her mother had been looked down upon, of course, for kinless folk and out-islanders, but nothing to hurt; and, even when Ioane [Uma’s prospective husband] came forward, there was less trouble at first than might have been looked for. And then, all of a sudden, about six months before my coming, Ioane backed out and left that part of the island, and from that day to this Uma and her mother had found themselves alone. None called at their house, none spoke to them on the roads. If they went to church, the other women drew their mats away and left them in a clear place

by themselves. It was a regular excommunication, like what you read of in the Middle Ages; and the cause or sense of it beyond guessing. (31)

Unable to verify their origins or their family, Uma and her mother are cast out as ‘kinless folk’, and thus rejected from the community of Falesá as well – they are tabooed. The ability to prove a relation to the group – to have ‘insider’ status – is evidently critical to life on Falesá, just as it is in Highland clans as we saw in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the prospect of an ‘out-islander’ marrying a local man (Ioane) is clearly against island regulations. This form of community policing ensures that the island remains unthreatened by outsiders. That Wiltshire compares this attitude to the excommunications of the Middle Ages demonstrates his belief that taboo, too, is mere superstition. By rigidly perceiving the system of taboo only in terms of superstition, Wiltshire is excluded from this ‘public secret’ due to his inability to see it as anything but an unsophisticated manifestation of irrational fear.

When Wiltshire, therefore, finds his house surrounded by inquisitive locals, it becomes clear that, while he has no idea what is happening, they do:

The crowd was greatly increased, the far bank of the river was lined for quite a way—perhaps thirty grown folk, and of children twice as many, some standing, some squatted on the ground, and all staring at my house. I have seen a house in a South Sea village thus surrounded, but then a trader was thrashing his wife inside, and she singing out. Here was nothing: the stove was alight, the smoke going up in a Christian manner; all was shipshape and Bristol fashion. (14)

That the crowd around his house clearly know something that he does not places him outside of a public secret in which they all share. And, as Vanessa Smith states in her study of friendship traditions in the Pacific between early voyagers and indigenous peoples, ‘[g]auging crowd feeling – ascertaining whether the bodies that surround one are fascinated or afraid or aggressive – is imperative to the instigation of trade, and the possibility of obtaining essential supplies’ (*Intimate Strangers*, 23).

Unable to comprehend this public secret, Wiltshire is trapped outside of a community that he does not understand and of which he needs to be a part in order to continue earning a living: ‘They say it scares a man to be alone. No such thing. What scares him in the dark or the high bush is that he can’t make sure, and there might be an army at his elbow. What scares him worst is to be right in the midst of a crowd, and have no guess of what they’re driving at’ (14). Wiltshire occupies the impossible position of being right in the middle of the group, and yet excluded from it, and his inability to understand the culture of the community has serious implications for his survival as a trader.

Yet this description is, in fact, characteristic of Wiltshire’s relationship to the Falesá community. Wiltshire does not understand that, having been tabooed, he is not only in the midst of the crowd, but he actually performs a central role to the island community. Having unwittingly broken a taboo, Wiltshire has not ruined the authority of this system of prohibition. In fact, by taking his grievances to the Speak House (with the dubious help of Case) and the chiefs, who ‘awaited us in one of their big oval houses, which was marked out to us from a long way off by the crowd about the eaves, a hundred strong if there was one—men, women, and children.’ (22-3), Wiltshire demonstrates the validity of the legal system of which he has become a part. The island elders function as judges, who, in front of the entire community, consider the taboo on Wiltshire. And more than this, the taboo sets a limit to the community – it enables the Falesá community to recognise that its inclusivity does not extend as far as Wiltshire. By becoming taboo himself, Wiltshire has both questioned the community’s laws, and helped it to exist as a group – without prohibited actions, objects or people, such as himself. As Chris Jenks explains: ‘To

transgress is to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or law or convention, it is to violate or infringe. But to transgress is also more than this, it is to announce and even laudate the commandment, the law or the convention.

Transgression is a deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation' (2). The very act of transgression acknowledges that there *is* a rule or limit to break. By transgressing the codes of taboo, albeit unknowingly, Wiltshire has simultaneously defied and affirmed the island's kinship system.

Jolly claims that, by the end of the novella, Wiltshire continues to defy both Pacific and European taboos, suggesting a form of resolution at the end of the text: "Wiltshire's decision to stay with Uma and legitimize their marriage [...] def[ies] at the same time both the taboo placed on her by the islanders and the European taboo on mixed-race relationships' ('Stevenson's "Sterling Domestic Fiction"', 473). Yet this is not simply an act of denunciation. By transgressing Pacific and European codes of conduct he also reaffirms their existence – as dislikeable as he is, Wiltshire is in a no-win situation, and this is reflected in 'The Beach of Falesá's' questionable ending. The text creates more possibilities than it resolves: Wiltshire remains an outsider from both cultures, and the text ends with his relocation to another island trading station, which pleases Wiltshire as it permits him to leave behind the vow he made to Tarleton to treat the locals fairly (70). As a trader he is destined to be a permanent outsider at the stations to which he is sent; yet, as an outsider, he also reaffirms both the European belief in the dishonour of mixed-race relations and the authority of the island's law-makers.

Luminous paint and Aeolian harps: 'a politic device'

Indeed, having no permanent base, the European traders in the Pacific islands find themselves to be continual exiles. Wiltshire makes no mention of a family or a home (it is only as an outsider in the Pacific that he eventually forms his own family), and the traders in 'The Ebb-Tide' (1894) have all been cast-out or alienated due to personal or professional failings.¹⁵ Similarly, Edmond writes that *The Wrecker* (1896), which depicts its heroes, Loudon Dodd and Jim Pinkerton, on the trail of a group of failed traders who have murdered the crew of the wreck they have bought, is:

full of estranged sons, reprobate heirs, remittance men and other runaways hiding behind aliases. Its most developed example is Carthew (aka Dickson, Goddedaal and Madden), alter ego of the narrator, [...]. He is a melancholy nihilist, *l'étranger* marooned in the Pacific, inadvertently caught up in the horror of the *Flying Scud* affair, and thereafter permanently exiled from his family estates. (181).

As Wiltshire discovers, the life of a trader is excluded and excluding. Jolly notices that: 'The society of Case and his cronies at first appeals to Wiltshire after the lonely years on his last island, "buying gin and going on a break, and then repenting; sitting in the house at night with the lamp for company" [...]; but he soon realizes it is merely an extension of the same kind of life, which excludes women and family' ('Stevenson's "Sterling Domestic Fiction"', 476). The permanent – and necessary – state of the trader, it seems, is one of exclusion; as we have seen, traders also perform a crucial function as outsiders, against which the island community defines itself. And, what is more, the position of outcast without family ties or duties also enables the trader to drift from island to island and perform his function as a merchant. Yet, more importantly, trading groups themselves function through exclusion; they

¹⁵ Herrick's career was 'one of unbroken shame' (125); Brown is a 'master-mariner in some disgrace' (127); Huish is a 'bad-hearted cockney clerk', who had 'alienated all his old employers so that they passed him in the street as if he were a dog' (127).

depend upon another trader being priced out of the market, and this often involves making pragmatic business relations, as we see with Case, who discovers that the island use of exclusion – in this case, taboo – can be useful to his trade.¹⁶ It is not until the end of the story that Wiltshire comprehends this, realising that ‘Case must be killed if Wiltshire is to trade’ (Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, 177), and as a result he finds himself both excluded from the trade, and from the island community, in Falesá.

‘The Beach of Falesá’ explores the manipulation, and thus the mechanics, of taboo, by both the native inhabitants of the island, and the European traders. Having been lured into his tabooed state by Case, who encouraged Wiltshire to marry Uma and who acted as ‘translator’ during the meeting with the village elders, Wiltshire is in fact a victim of trading rivalries. The taboo remains an imposition of the island law, yet it is Case who is revealed to be pulling the strings, by manipulating the system on which the community depends and by setting *himself* up in the authoritative position of a devil-god, ‘Tiapolo’. Thus, by dismantling the systems upon which the community depends to enforce law and order and a sense of kinship, Case reassembles them – with himself in a commanding position. Case reveals the artificiality behind this, apparently ‘primitive’, form of kinship, by imitating and warping it for his own ends: he understands the island’s customs and laws better than Wiltshire. If we recollect Stevenson’s claim that, ‘perhaps, we should understand the idea of the hidden *tapu* otherwise, as a politic device to spread uneasiness and extort confessions’ (*In the South Seas*, 41), we arrive at Case’s use of taboo. While

¹⁶ Oliver S. Buckton points out that it is the two traders’ individualism which causes the problems on Falesá: ‘commercial interests cause this bond of the white men to unravel, as Case reminds Wiltshire “I’m a trader myself” and so must protect his own interests’ (235).

appearing to be inexplicable, taboo and the customs surrounding it can be manipulated as a political tool of exclusion by those in positions of authority.

On Falesá, it turns out, Case has a history of scheming and possibly murder. Keen to profit from his copra store, Case has already seen off three previous traders, Vigours, Adams and Underhill. Underhill, prone to some kind of fitting, died a terrible death at the hands of Case and his protégé Namu, the pastor, who buried him alive after convincing the locals that he was a devil (40). As well as this, ‘he is accused of poisoning Adams; he drove Vigours out of the place by lies that might have led to murder; and there is no question but he has now made up his mind to rid himself of you’ (42). Tarleton, the missionary, explains to Wiltshire that ‘white men die very suddenly in Falesá’ (40). While these deaths appear to be mysterious, they are, in fact, a part of Case’s ongoing monopoly of the island trade, and manipulation of its social structure.

H. E. Maude explained that traders ‘had to ascertain and conform to local mores and etiquette, as well as to the consumer preferences of their customers, if they were to succeed in their ventures. Though the traders frequently had to pay the pipers, it was the islanders who in reality called the tunes’ (cited in Smith, *Literary Culture*, 125). While the European traders, who set the price of their merchandise, had the broad balance of power, they still had to fit in to the cultures in which they found themselves. Accordingly, Case’s method of social control depends upon isolation: Underhill is ‘outed’ as a devil; Tarleton is humiliated and undermined by a magic trick which suggests his motives are solely pecuniary (42); Uma is tabooed as an ‘out-islander’ (Tarleton claims that Case’s initial plan for Uma was to isolate her to ‘have his wicked will of her’ (42)); Wiltshire, having been encouraged to ‘marry’

Uma, is thus tabooed by association. By understanding, and as a result gaining authority within, the community, Case is able to manipulate the boundaries that define who is and who is not a part of the group. And he has done this by becoming Tiapolo, a devil-god. What, exactly, Case's powers are, and what he does, is the topic of speculation: 'Some said he had a church there, where he worshipped Tiapolo, and Tiapolo appeared to him; others swore that there was no sorcery at all, that he performed his miracles by the power of prayer, and the church was no church, but a prison, in which he had confined a dangerous *aitu*' (47). Case's powers are vague, but by understanding the community's way of thinking, he is able to play the part of a sympathiser and, eventually, a god.

The methods that he has actually used to gain the locals' trust rely on luminous paint and hand-made figures and harps: in the forest, he has created a 'temple', which produces colours and sounds that the inhabitants of Falesá take to be magical. 'With a box of tools and a few mighty simple contrivances he had made out to have a devil of a temple. Any poor Kanaka brought up here in the dark, with the harps whining all round him, and shown that smoking face in the bottom of a hole, would make no kind of doubt but he had seen and heard enough devils for a lifetime' (55). With such authority, Case is able to manipulate island laws – the inhabitants are both afraid of his powers and impressed by his abilities.¹⁷ Thus, the whole anthropological concept of taboo is, on Falesá, a simulation, with 'real' consequences. The taboo is manufactured; yet what is more interesting is that the community knows this to be the case.

¹⁷ As Robert Kiely explains, '[b]y forcing the natives of Falesá to concentrate upon "forbidden acts" (taboos), devilish curses, and back magic, Case plays upon their weakness and fear, and paralyzes them so that he can move about doing as he likes without interference' (173).

Wiltshire cites the example of Maea, an island chief, who switches allegiances after Case offends him by pursuing the same girl: ‘One thing I made out: he could never really have thought much harm of Uma; he could never have been really frightened, and must just have made believe from dodginess, and because he thought Case had a strong pull in the village and could help him on’ (58). The taboo is, indeed, a ‘politic device’, and not solely for Case: as Stevenson wrote in *In the South Seas*, ‘this is perhaps the strangest feature of the system – that it should be regarded from without with such a mental and implicit awe, and, when examined from within, should present so many apparent evidences of design’ (52-3). It is used by the chiefs as a method of maintaining social order, whether it is a ‘legitimate’ taboo, or not. What is more, even the locals on Falesá are willing to chat with Wiltshire while he remains under the taboo, as long as they are not seen: ‘I found people willing enough to pass the time of day with me where nobody could see them’ (46). The inhabitants of Falesá are able to see through the taboo, and only uphold it as a public, almost ceremonial, duty. Wiltshire remains excluded from the community, and his shop remains unused, but the people see no reason not to stop for a quick chat with the cast-out when out of view. Taboo has become a performance; publicly they go through the motions as this will protect the community, and as a result, privately, they can do whatever they wish.

Reid’s reading of ‘The Beach of Falesá’ suggests that: ‘What emerges here is a radical recognition that superstition is used by white men against the natives, as an instrument of social control’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 154). Yet this does not solely result in the disempowerment of the indigenous peoples of Falesá: as Reid goes on to explain, Wiltshire also ‘implicitly

acknowledges that political savoir-faire rather than naïvety dictates native acceptance of taboos' (155). Indeed, Jolly also notes that: 'Initially experienced by Wiltshire as a series of uncanny moments—the silent crowd surrounding his house [...], the native pastor struck dumb and aghast at the sight of him [...]—the taboo is soon taken out of the realm of the uncanny and situated within a framework of village politics, trade and sexual rivalries, and local conventions about class and status' ('Stevenson's "Sterling Domestic Fiction"', 470). The community's system of taboo as a mysterious influence is, certainly, believed in; but it is also a recognisably artificial imposition, which is accepted as it maintains order, hierarchy and authority. And what is more, this system is even removed from the community altogether, as it becomes a tool to manipulate by white men *against other white men*: in Falesá, the only way to win the battle of trade is to use the instruments which are available to exclude other traders, and one of these is to understand the island's kinship conventions and its use of taboo.

While Wiltshire mockingly exclaims that: 'We laugh at the natives and their superstitions; but see how many traders take them up, splendidly educated white men, that have been bookkeepers (some of them) and clerks in the old country' (52), it becomes clear that these 'splendidly educated white men', recognising the influence of such beliefs and the locals' use of them as a tool of social and legal influence, may be taking up these superstitions for more practical reasons – as we see in the example of Case. As Smith explains, 'Stevenson explores the two sides of the trader's contract: the allegiance to empire, and involvement in the local politics of cultural performance' (*Literary Culture*, 125); it is this performance of taboo which Wiltshire comprehends almost too late. Taboo becomes a knowingly manipulated

device used not only to maintain local laws, but to sustain trading practices, both by creating an understanding between European trader and Pacific islander, but also by generating a hierarchy between the traders themselves.

Diseased islands and physical isolation

Before Wiltshire has even arrived on Falesá he is told of the strange death of one of his predecessors, Adams, by the captain of the boat which is taking him to the island:

‘What did he die of?’ I inquired.

‘Some kind of sickness,’ says the captain. ‘It appears it took him sudden. [...]. When they found him, the next day, he was clean crazy—carried on all the time about somebody watering his copra. Poor John!’

‘Was it thought to be the island?’ I asked.

‘Well, it was thought to be the island, or the trouble, or something,’ he replied. (4)

To Wiltshire, the island itself could be potent enough to cause Adams’ death. Of course, Adams’ mysterious demise was, it is later understood, the result of his trading rivalry with Case, but the implication that the island could cause illness and death in some way suggests not only the apparent danger of foreign lands, but more specifically of enclosed, island communities. Stevenson also noted the unhealthy danger of such confined bounds in others of his South Seas Tales. ‘The Ebb-Tide’, for example, features an island which is a stop-off for European traders and which has, as a result, become rife with sickness: ‘Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease’ (123). The island in ‘The Ebb-Tide’ has been ‘infected’ by the presence of Europeans, and now, as Herrick, Huish and Davis find, in their equally unhealthy state, it is difficult to escape. Attwater’s island, meanwhile, has been overcome by smallpox, leading to the death of most of

its (native) inhabitants (193-4). And the figure of the isolated cast-away on a dangerous or disease-ridden island features regularly in other works: David believes he is marooned on a tidal island near the Ross of Mull in *Kidnapped*; in *Catriona* he is imprisoned on the Bass Rock; Jim Hawkins describes the ‘chill and the vapour’ which ‘told a poor tale of the island. It was plainly a damp, feverish, unhealthy spot’ (*Treasure Island*, 104); in *The Merry Men* Charles visits his uncle and cousin on the island of Eilean Aros, which is surrounded by dangerous reefs, on which ships are mysteriously wrecked; Wiltshire, of course, is destined to roam the Pacific islands and their trading outpost communities. The island location provides complete exile – a place where taboos such as illness can be physically isolated, putting an end to contagion and the contamination of ‘normal’ society.

The island community functions as a quarantine in which disease can spread, but in a controlled environment: it cannot escape the confines of the island’s shores. While these examples are not cases of the deliberate isolation of diseases, and rather demonstrate the dangers of European interference in island communities, such physical segregation was also recognised as a method of disease management: while he was in the South Pacific, Stevenson witnessed the role of social exclusion first-hand, which helped to uphold the very notion of a moral, clean Victorian society. The importance of exclusion to kinship forms becomes yet more evident in his writings on another, very nineteenth-century, taboo – Hansen’s Disease, or leprosy. While the figure of the excluded ‘leper’ features in literature from the Bible onwards, the Victorians created new methods of avoidance and isolation, as well as new

discussions about the origins of the illness.¹⁸ Just as those categorised as insane were confined in madhouses and those judged to have broken the law were locked up in prison, people diagnosed with leprosy were now consigned to the new concept of the leper ‘colony’, a very late-nineteenth century, imperialist ‘institution’. This very physical disease, it seems, required a physical solution.¹⁹

The high numbers of leprosy cases in the South Pacific – and on the Hawaiian islands in particular – led to the enforced physical isolation of lepers on the island of Molokai, which Stevenson visited for a week in 1889.²⁰ This exclusion of leprosy sufferers, like taboo, served to create and uphold social boundaries. Molokai became a leper ‘colony’ in the middle of the nineteenth century, following the Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy in 1865.²¹ Leprosy sufferers from the Hawaiian islands were forced to leave their families to be transported to a settlement called Kalawao, which occupied an eastern peninsula of the island. Leprosy was believed to have been introduced to the Hawaiian islands not long before, by Chinese labourers – like the disease-ridden island in ‘The Ebb-Tide’, leprosy was believed to have been introduced by foreign traders and labour – yet Edmond explains that it quickly became a ‘native’ disease (*Leprosy and Empire*, 146). He writes that, while the disease was originally named ‘the Chinese disease’ (*mai Pake*), it quickly became

¹⁸ The Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament sees the leper sent ‘without the camp’ (13:46), for example; yet Edmond explains that ‘In the New Testament, however, the leper becomes a figure of pity and leprosy a metaphor of divine salvation, with the emphasis on treatment and cure rather than on diagnosis and segregation. St Francis exemplified this latter tradition, cherishing rather than abjuring the pariah of the Old Testament’ (‘Abject bodies/abject sites’, 133)

¹⁹ Edmond discusses the physical manifestation of leprosy and Christian considerations of this as evidence of impurity in *Leprosy and Empire* (4-5), and the deformity it causes in a medical context (61-109).

²⁰ Stevenson wrote to Colvin: ‘I am just home after twelve days’ journey to Molokai, seven of them at the leper settlement’ (*Letters* 6: 310). The outcast figure of the leper also featured in his earlier historical romance, set in the Wars of the Roses, *The Black Arrow* (1888; serialised in 1883 in *Young Folks*).

²¹ This Act, in Hawaii, condemned leprosy sufferers to permanent isolation from their families and community, in a similar way to the treatment of convicts.

termed ‘the separating sickness’ (*mai ho’okawale*): leprosy and exclusion became inextricable ideas (146-7). Believed to be highly contagious, leprosy was surrounded by a form of superstitious dread for centuries. In the nineteenth century, leprosy was frequently associated with venereal disease, and was commonly believed to be the manifestation of the later stages of syphilis (64).²² This perpetuated the Biblical view of the leper as ‘unclean’, which persisted until the twentieth century. The need to ‘purify’ the leper can be seen, for example, in the medieval practice of classifying the sufferer as dead: a priest would throw ‘three spadefuls of earth on their head, announcing they were dead to the world but would be reborn to God’ (144). Christian missionary efforts to ‘cleanse’ leprosy sufferers were particularly common during the expansion of empire, and continued in nineteenth century Molokai, where Father Damien became a figure of international renown for his work on the island – and his death there, of leprosy. Indeed, Stevenson wrote a defence of his conduct in 1890, and Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson wrote of a kindly, yet similarly compromised, priest, Father Canonhurst, in her short story ‘The Half-White’ (1891). By occupying both a revered position, as a priest, and falling victim to leprosy,

²² There were many other suggestions concerning cause of leprosy, including diet, incest and weather. Many of these were specifically believed to affect the black population only (Edmond, *Leprosy and Empire*, 10). Edmond also writes that ‘Dutch settlers in Ceylon at the end of the eighteenth century decided that leprosy was caused by eating breadfruit and ordered all the trees to be cut down’ (10). For more about the perceived causes behind leprosy, see also Edmond, *Leprosy and Empire*, (61-109).

In ‘The Beach of Falesá’ Uma and Wiltshire argue about how to expunge themselves of *aitus* (devils):

[...] ‘how do you suppose we get along with our own *aitus* at home? All Bible Society!’

‘I think you no got any,’ said she. ‘White man, he tell me you no got.’

‘Sounds likely, don’t it?’ I asked. ‘Why would these islands all be chock full of them and none in Europe?’

‘Well, you no got breadfruit,’ said she. (60)

Breadfruit are, here, a tabooed food; placed in the context of the belief that breadfruit caused leprosy, we have an interesting reading of ‘The Beach of Falesá’ and the *aitus* of which the islanders are afraid.

Damien had crossed the boundaries that were expected of him, and was excluded posthumously by his former colleagues in their writings.²³

The island leper colony, however, like the island laws on Falesá, becomes a manifestation of the social need for transgression. By transgressing the bounds of the socially acceptable, albeit unintentionally, those with leprosy are cast out as 'unclean'. 'Clean' society is now, therefore, more easily identifiable: it gains a sense of validity from its binary opposite. Confining lepers to island colonies is a more extreme extension of this need to confirm the boundaries of kinship: the leper colony is a physical manifestation of taboo. Edmond uses Julia Kristeva's consideration of abjection to term the leper colony 'a vivid example of such an abject zone. Leprosy is the boundary disease *par excellence*, and islands raise the question of limits and boundaries in acute form' ('Abject bodies/abject sites', 135).²⁴ Not only is the island a home to the living-dead (the leper himself, Edmond explains, is the personification of a borderland), but leprosy and the leper colony 'can focus and dramatise the risk of trespass, serve as a punishment for such infringements, and help to re-establish the categories and boundaries that define our relation to the world by keeping the clean

²³ See 'Father Damien: An Open Letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu' (1890), in which Stevenson defended Damien from one particular attack by Hyde. Stevenson wrote: 'the man who tried to do what Damien did, is my father and the father of the man in the Apia bar, and the father of all who love goodness, and he was your father too, if God had given you grace to see it' (32). Meanwhile, the title of Fanny Stevenson's story points towards the impurity of the leper: the character is a mix of skin colours, having a native Hawaiian mother (who also suffered from leprosy) and English father. Father Canonhurst in the story uses the commonly believed theory that leprosy (like madness) could skip a generation and come back all the more strong: 'On one point all scientists are agreed. If leprosy, insanity, or phthisis pass over one generation, the probability is strong that the malady will attack the next with renewed vigor' (286).

²⁴ Kristeva writes that the dead body is the key example of abjection: 'The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part [...]' (4); Edmond claims that, in fact, the living-dead body of the leper demonstrates this even more clearly. Abjection, Kristeva claims, is caused by such in-between states: 'It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (4). Leprosy sufferers fulfil this role, but as this chapter argues, it is their very in-between state – their transgression of boundaries – which problematically identifies boundaries in the first place.

from the unclean' (*Leprosy and Empire*, 10-11). The leper colony, like the use of taboo in 'The Beach of Falesá', reveals the boundaries between 'clean' and 'unclean' society, by revealing that which is outside 'normal', healthy Victorian society.

Yet Beer explains that the island trope is regularly used to portray blurred boundaries: 'But neither are the bounds of the island quite defined: the shore and the sea coexist in a shifting liminality as the tide recedes and reclaims the land' (33). Certainly, the beach represents a border-state, as Stevenson recognised in 'The Ebb-Tide', and the problem which the shoreline poses on the leper colony is no different. On landing on Molokai, Stevenson recounted the dilemma he faced during his first encounter with the lepers: 'Every hand was offered; I had gloves, but I had made up my mind on the boat's voyage *not* to give my hand, that seemed less offensive than the gloves.' (*Letters* 6: 306).²⁵ This initial meeting of 'clean' and 'unclean' required either gloves, or no contact at all, in order to re-establish vague boundaries. Yet beyond this stretch of beach, the leper colony creates a clear distinction: on first landing on Molokai, Stevenson wrote that: 'Along the brink, rock architecture and sea music please the senses, and in that tainted place the thought of the cleanness of the antiseptic ocean is welcome to the mind' (*Travels in Hawaii*, 49). From a distance, the island becomes a physical prison and the sea a sterile buffer-land, which assures one group of their uncontaminated community, and the other of their isolation.

During his visit, Stevenson wrote in favour of the Molokai colony: 'He cannot observe with candour, but he must see it is not only good for the world but

²⁵ 'The Ebb-Tide' opens with the three adventurers on a beach, and also occupying the social position known as 'on the beach', which is a 'telling South Sea phrase' (124) meaning unemployed or destitute. The men are between occupations and between travels, and even between identities, being so ashamed that they take on aliases.

best for the lepers themselves to be thus set apart' (*Travels in Hawaii*, 68). Not only did this separation protect the mainland population, he suggested, but it enabled the lepers to live without shame. Stevenson was surprised when he saw those disfigured by the disease socialising, unabashed (67); living under the shadow of such a taboo in 'mixed' society is not as easy. Yet it was leaving 'mixed' society itself that caused the most problems: the leper colony was full of people who have been forced to leave their families behind, and thus became a substitute form of family.

Considering his fascination with extra-familial groups, it is unsurprising that Stevenson was unsympathetic about this: he suggested that the Hawaiian families' ties were unnaturally strong. Their family affection, he claimed, was 'luxuriously self-indulgent' (39), and resistance to separation meant that '[a]gainst this undignified fervour of attachment, marital and parental, the law of segregation often beats in vain' (40).²⁶ Meanwhile, leprosy sufferers on Molokai who had 'clean' children were forcibly separated from them, as they were returned to live with family on the mainland. Stevenson, again, noted the strength and naivety of familial affection, which, he suggested, was more self-pitying than useful: 'They were all the same; all from leper parents, all pleading to have their clean children retained in that abode of sorrow, and all alleging the same reason—*aloha nui nui*—an extreme affection' (40). The exclusion caused by the leper colony extended to the family as well: leprosy, and the rules surrounding it, tore families apart and created a substitute family 'colony' on islands such as Molokai.

Thus, the leper colony, a place of forced exile, becomes a place of forced kinship. Here, taboo comes full-circle, and the exclusion by which it is characterised

²⁶ He also notes the less-common appearance of a white man leaving his family to join the colony: 'one white man, leaving a large grown family behind him in Honolulu' (*Letters* 6: 306).

creates a kinship group – of outsiders. Like the cast-out ‘chiefless folk’ of Balquidder in *Kidnapped* (173) and tabooed ‘kinless folk’ (30) of Falesá, the island is home to tabooed outcasts with no family, and yet they become their own kinship group: they have been separated from their families, only to form another, family-like, group. Indeed, Stevenson, the leper-tourist, who classed his visit to this excluded community as an ‘adventure’ (*Letters* 6: 305), recounted a confusion he got into on first arriving, when he was mistaken for ‘the new white leper’ (*Travels in Hawaii*, 65), and on correcting the mistake he was treated with less warmth. Here, it was Stevenson who, as the relatively healthy individual, was the outsider: ‘Within the precinct, to be leprous is the rule.’ (67). Once again in the role of the onlooker or outsider, Stevenson’s narrative is a series of observances of life on Molokai – with which he appears unable to be involved. While lepers were shunned in ‘normal’ society, here it was he who faced isolation: ‘Singular indeed is the isolation of the visitor in the Lazaretto. No patient is suffered to approach his place of residence. His room is tidied out by a clean helper during the day and while he is abroad. He returns at night to solitary walls’ (51). This, of course, was deemed to be for his own protection, yet as Stevenson began to realise, on Molokai it was he who lived the life of a leper, to speak figuratively. Just as Wiltshire, who believes that ‘It would be a strange thing if we came all this way and couldn’t do what we pleased’ (‘The Beach of Falesá’, 24), is forced to reassess the idea of community after being tabooed and becoming the outsider within ‘his own’ empire, kinship had turned topsy-turvy before Stevenson’s very eyes. This web of exclusion and exclusivity is a self-perpetuating system on which kinship is dependent. To become a member of one group means to be left out of another; both concepts here become interdependent. Of

course, much of this is due to perspective – stand on one island, and you are excluded from another. Yet this is how kinship functions and how it creates its boundaries; it is through the existence – and rejection – of an Other that a group can find definition and validation.

By positioning Wiltshire – and Stevenson himself in Molokai and the islands of the South Pacific, and even David in *Kidnapped* – as the outsider looking in on confusing and seemingly indecipherable cultures, Stevenson recognises the importance of the excluded to the formation of a discrete social group. But more than this, he demonstrates the importance of creating social boundaries through the possibility of transgression. Wiltshire spends the entire story attempting to understand and uncover what this ‘secret’ of taboo is, when, in fact, it is not magical and its ‘meaning’ lies with he himself, for it is he who has transgressed the codes of the island and been tabooed and excluded, and he therefore becomes an example of how the community functions. With the potential of being tabooed comes the recognition and the validation of a kinship community; it acknowledges an ‘outside’ to the group beyond its bounds, a line where membership becomes unacceptable or impossible. By taking his protagonists away from their culturally-dominant origins and placing them within other systems of kinship, Stevenson – like Allen in *The Great Taboo*, and Melville, during his much earlier travels in the Pacific, and writers such as Jack London, who followed on from Stevenson²⁷ – acknowledges the relativity of communal form and the similarities between the structure of kinship

²⁷ London wrote ‘The Red One’ (1916), the focus of which is European transgression of taboo, as well as short stories about both Pacific island and European sufferers of leprosy: for example, ‘Good-By, Jack’ (1909), ‘The Sheriff of Kona’ (1909), ‘Koolau the Leper’ (1909), and London’s account of his own stay on Molokai in *The Cruise of the Snark* (1911).

groups everywhere. Those who are outside of a kinship form are just as important to it as those who are within.

POLITICAL FAMILIES AND SECRET SOCIETIES

4. 'I have hated you all my life': fraternal enemies from the domestic to the political

I was born a hater of injustice [...]. [...] [I]n surely no ungenerous impatience I enrolled myself among the enemies of this unjust and doomed society; in surely no unnatural desire to keep the fires of my philanthropy alight, I bound myself by an irrevocable oath.

Robert Louis Stevenson and Fanny Stevenson, *The Dynamiter* (1885)

I could never forget that you were, after all, a member of the family.

Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889)

Mary Ann Clawson writes that: 'Fraternalism was one of the most widely available and persistently used forms of collective organization in European and American history from the Middle Ages onward' (13). The ideal of brotherly relations, she suggests, extended from 'assumptions about mutual obligation and masculine authority' (22) in the patriarchal family system to other, family-like, forms of social organisation; brotherhood is associated with ideals of equal relations and obligations (which are, problematically, amongst men only). Yet as this chapter will demonstrate, brotherhood is a necessarily exclusive and excluding relationship: the very act of participating in fraternal relations also realises the separation and exile which we considered in the previous chapter; brotherhood depends on an Other. Stevenson recognised this sense of estrangement in his own 'brotherly' relations with his cousin, Bob, who fulfilled this fraternal role; as we saw in the Introduction, he described Bob as 'the man likest and most unlike me that I have ever met' (cited in *Letters* 1: 35). Yet despite this evident disparity, these familial, fraternal ties, as Clawson notes, became a paradigm of supposedly equal kinship relations and the term 'brotherhood' grew to be synonymous with clubs, social groups and secret

societies which participate in such, seemingly egalitarian, brotherly interactions.

Clawson considers the brotherly relations and their reliance on oaths and ritual in secret societies such as the Freemasons and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, yet the form is also used more self-consciously in the titles of groups including the Fraternal Democrats, for example, which was a mid-nineteenth century secret society with socialist principles,¹ and the Fenian Brotherhood (also known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood), which we will consider later in the chapter, and which operated at the end of the nineteenth century with the aim of creating an independent Ireland.

Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink and Katherine Holden also recognise the use of brotherly relations in a number of past and present social – and secretive – institutions:

All-male organizations such as the guilds and confraternities of early modern Europe operated along familial lines with senior men as fathers, juniors as sons. Inheritance of skill, even property might pass within the guild from the elder generation to the younger, bypassing genetic offspring. [...] The Freemasons and the Mafia not only have hierarchies of Fathers (Godfathers), Sons and Brothers, but in many ways turn the organization itself into ‘The Family’, a term openly used by the Mafiosa. Even while men within these organizations care for each other with the most intense loyalties, feminine elements are expunged from within their own psyches through ritual humiliation. Despite the declared aims of taking care of their own families, in extreme cases loyalties to ‘The Family’ override those afforded to individual families, whose material and emotional needs, even lives, will be sacrificed in the name of the blood Brotherhood. (8-9)

‘Blood Brotherhood’ here is taken to denote the relations shared by fraternal societies; while not related by blood, their bond is perceived to be just as strong and

¹ Charles William Heckethorn wrote that: ‘The first attempt at an international society was made by a small number of German workmen in London, who had been expelled from France in 1839 for taking part in the *émeute* in Paris. Its members consisted of Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Danes, and Swedes. [...] The society was on friendly terms with the English Socialists, the Chartists, and the London French Democrat Society. Out of that friendship sprang the Society of Fraternal Democrats’ (2nd Ed., 2: 115).

longlasting. And this form of brotherhood is, in fact, stronger than blood: like the clan kinship which becomes more family-like than the family, which we encountered in Chapter 2, fraternal relations can ‘override’ the ‘natural’ family. These societies adopt family ties to create a bond of allegiance and equality amongst their – male-only – members, which would not ‘naturally’ exist between them, and which excludes the uninitiated and, specifically, women.

Secret societies are a fundamental example of a fraternal order: dependent on oaths and ritual to re-form members into equal, homogenous, elements of the group, they also rely on a sense of Otherness. Simply by joining a secret society all notions of equality are dispelled: now, there remains a necessary distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Yet this privileged status, and exclusivity, of brotherly relations also made fraternal orders such as secret societies particularly intriguing. In 1875 the historian Charles William Heckethorn compiled a detailed catalogue of *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries*, an ambitious study which ran into two volumes; a second, ‘greatly enlarged’, edition was printed in 1897, underscoring the interest in secret societies within this period: Heckethorn, in fact, wrote a number of books about secret societies in his lifetime. His study featured aspects of secret societies which only sworn-members should know: details of oaths, rituals, meetings, myths of origin. Heckethorn sought to expose the secrets behind such groups, but by suggesting that such a manual was needed he assisted in the mythologisation of their secretive aspects and the belief that secret societies functioned through such enigmatic rituals. Elements of secrecy attributed to secret societies were thus created by public discourses, such as Heckethorn’s theories about the ‘truths’ behind the

groups and novels – *The Dynamiter* is one example – which feature the strange customs for which these societies were known.

Heckethorn was, of course, writing in the aftermath of the continental revolutions and Chartist rebellions of the 1840s, which had drawn attention to the political – and, problematically, public – nature of secret societies. With political revolutions in Germany and Italy in 1848, amongst other European countries,² and a rising fear of socialist groups,³ secrecy and surveillance became increasingly important tools for both the protection and the overthrow of the modern state.⁴ Italy, for example, had been a home to secret societies with a political aim since the early nineteenth century, and one of the key groups involved in the movement for Italian independence was the secret society known as the Carbonari.⁵ Heckethorn believed

² The revolutions of 1848 included Italian revolutions for independence, the Sicilian revolution for independence, the February Revolution in France, the March Revolution in Germany, as well as political change and unrest in Denmark, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Slovakia and Poland.

³ Phillip Thurmond Smith writes that, amongst refugees entering Britain after the 1848 revolutions: ‘In general the refugees’ social class determined the degree of acceptance by Englishmen. “Respectable” *émigrés* were less inclined to espouse socialism and were thus more likely to benefit from both English sympathy and charity than were purely working-class ones’ (81). In Lydia Alix Fillingham’s discussion of *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), she compares the fear of Mormonism (which we will discuss in the next chapter) to the fear of socialism, and explains that: ‘While Conan Doyle was writing, socialism in general and English socialists in particular were widely disapproved of. Socialists were seen as menacing the key points of Liberal ideology’ (682).

⁴ ‘Secret Police’, states David Vincent, ‘destroyed the ability to police your own secrets’ (21). As we have seen, the authority of the detective challenged the authority of the Victorian household. Vincent locates the beginning of a ‘culture of secrecy’ with the postal spying scandal of 1844, in which it was revealed the Post Office had been opening and reading suspicious-looking items of post; this was revealed after Guiseppe Mazzini, a key figure in the independence of Italy and an ex-Carbonari member, discovered that his mail had been tampered with.

⁵ Martin Clark writes that, in Italy, ‘[a]fter 1815 secret societies still flourished. There were many different sects, of varying views: e.g. *Calderari*, *Concistoriali*, *Guelfi*, and the *Adelfi*, who in 1818 became known as the Perfect Sublime Masters, led by the veteran revolutionary Filippo Buonarroti and influential in northern Italy’ (36). The Carbonari were a particularly high-profile group. Their origins as woodburners are debated, and some argue that the group began in Scotland (Rath, 354). It is clear, however, that the Carbonari moved from France to southern Italy in a move to unseat the government, and had at least 300,000 members by the 1820s, when they staged a revolt in Naples (Clark, 36-7). The Carbonari’s failed attempts at Italian independence in the 1820s and 1830s led Guiseppe Mazzini to form the offshoot group, ‘Young Italy’. Clark suggests that: “‘Young Italy’ was not, of course, alone. The *Carbonari* were still strong in the south, as were other societies like the *Filadelfi* or Nicola Fabrizi’s Italic Legion. Each sect had its own programme and its own blueprint for the Italian future’ (39).

there to be a distinct threat from secret societies towards the end of the nineteenth century:

Secret Societies, religious and political, are again springing up on many sides: the religious may be dismissed without comment, as they are generally without any novelty or significance, but those that have political objects ought not to be disregarded as without importance. The International, Fenians, Communists, Nihilists, Wahábees, are secretly aiming at the overthrow of existing governments and the present order of things. The murders of Englishmen perpetrated by native Indians point to the machinations of secret societies in British India. [...] [T]he proceedings of the natives should be closely watched. (1st Ed., 1: xvii)

Heckethorn did not state how, exactly, he knew that these groups were ‘secretly aiming at the overthrow of existing governments’. Yet the revolutions in Europe were considered an example of the threat that such groups could pose to Britain; secret societies, we should note, were deemed a foreign threat. And public knowledge of the existence of these ‘secret’ groups and their activity augmented the fear of foreign plots against Britain as well as the intrigue in secret societies.

The political nature of secret societies made them a new form of danger to Britain in this mid-to-late Victorian period: as groups which were subject to conjecture, yet with very little actually known about them, their odd mixture of public and private action made them intriguing and mysterious phenomena. Benjamin Disraeli made a public speech on the topic in which he set secret societies very much apart from ‘this world’: the official, British world of open, hierarchical power:

[I]n the attempt to conduct the government of this world there are now elements to be considered which our predecessors had not to deal with. We have now to deal not merely with Emperors, with Princes, and with Ministers. There are the Secret Societies, an element which we must take into account, and which at the last moment may baffle all our arrangements—Societies which have regular agents everywhere, which countenance assassination, and which, if necessary, could produce a massacre. (‘Lord Beaconsfield at Aylesbury’, 6)

While such a speech surely helped to justify British use of spies and secret police,⁶ it also demonstrates a clear apprehension of the power of such elusive groups: secret political groups were seen to be a threat to the current social order. Disraeli's speech emphasised the fear of secret societies, not to mention their political power, for he placed them alongside Emperors and Princes (both, of course, also examples of non-egalitarian regimes). He portrayed the secret society as an all-pervasive, yet invisible, threat, which would use violent means to threaten the authority and 'arrangements' of 'this world'. The fraternal relations of equality espoused by organisations such as the secret society were evidently far from 'brotherly' to those outside of the group.

Given this growing public awareness of secret groups, it is perhaps unsurprising that secret societies and Brotherhood groups are regular features in Stevenson's writings from the 1880s; in these texts, revolution and national liberation set the tone of Stevenson's writing. With Ireland now threatening to follow the continental revolutions of the mid-century, in this decade Stevenson's texts are dominated by political instability, secret, nationalist movements and, more explicit, bombing campaigns by the Fenian Brotherhood: Brotherhood groups – and brotherhood itself – as we will see, take on a political edge. 'The Pavilion on the Links' (1880/82), for example, concerns a rogue banker on whom the Carbonari want their revenge; *Prince Otto* (1885) depicts the collapse of the country of

⁶ The increasingly public nature of surveillance that the mid-Victorian period witnessed began as an attempt to counteract potential public disorder following the influx of political refugees from the continental revolutions of 1848 and the mass Chartist protests of the 1840s, which called for solutions to social inequalities such as the extension of the franchise, which alarmed the conservative middle- and upper-class populace. Phillip Thurmond Smith explains that, much to public disgust, informers were used throughout the Victorian period, and police surveillance became standard practice from the middle of the period (72-3). The Detective Department, meanwhile, was established in 1842.

Grünwald and the dissatisfaction of its residents, who have formed a secret society to bring about the downfall of the eponymous hero. *The Dynamiter*, meanwhile, comes closer to home: dedicated to two British police officers who were injured by a Fenian bomb, the text proceeds to ridicule the efforts of a fictional Irish group to blow up a statue of Shakespeare in London. And it should be noted that Stevenson himself corresponded with Baxter about the similarities between their youthful club, the L.J.R., and the Freemasons, of which Baxter was a member, writing that he was wary of such a ‘confraternity’ (*Letters* 7: 192).⁷ While identifying problems on a national level, this preoccupation with secret Brotherhoods in Stevenson’s works also reveals a change in more local, group relationships. Indeed, the notion of brotherhood also features in its more traditional sense in *The Master of Ballantrae*, with the feud between James and Henry. This chapter will consider the concept of ‘brotherhood’, in both its domestic and political form. While, at face value, fraternal relationships in *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Dynamiter* mean very different things, it is in these texts that the transition from a consanguineous, ‘natural’ family, to family-like kinship becomes clear, and the two changing concepts, ‘brotherhood’ and ‘Brotherhood’, overlap and exchange values.⁸

As we have seen, brotherhood is not simply the consanguineous tie into which people are born; its use extends beyond this direct relation to take on an

⁷ In a response to a letter from Baxter, in which he states that the Freemasons and the L.J.R. were ‘not dissimilar’, Stevenson wrote:

You must have great larks over Masonry. You’re away up in the ranks now and (according to works that I have read) doubtless design assassinations and kiss – I believe it is the devil’s arse? But I am an outsider; and I have a certain liking for a light unto my path which would deter me from joining the rank and file of so vast and dim a confraternity. At your altitude it becomes (of course) amusing and – perhaps – useful. Yes I remember the L.J.R., and the constitution and my homily on Liberty and yours on Reverence which was never written – so I never knew what reverence was. I remember I wanted to write Justice also; but I forget who had the billet. (*Letters* 7: 192).

⁸ This chapter will differentiate between consanguineous brotherhood and political Brotherhood groups with the capitalisation of the latter.

overtly political tone. The word ‘brotherhood’ has been used for centuries to describe societies and groups: the first entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for an ‘association’ of brothers is dated at approximately 1340 (“brotherhood”). Yet it is in the late eighteenth century that a perceivable change in its usage occurs. A more universal definition of ‘brotherhood’ appearing in the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes it as: ‘fellowship; community of feeling uniting man and man [...]. A modern notion frequent in “brotherhood of man”, “universal brotherhood” etc.’ As a more abstract phenomenon, brotherhood was now described as a form of kinship which is dependent on the vague notion of a shared ‘feeling’ which is common to all humans, rather than a relationship based around a mutual interest, such as a social group. This meaning was first recorded in 1785, by William Cowper, who described ‘the link of brotherhood, by which/One common Maker bound me to the kind’ (‘The Task’, 3:208-9). Brotherhood became associated with the shared origins of *all* of mankind, not simply the immediate family, which had a levelling effect: class, wealth and blood mean nothing when it is considered that man derives from a ‘common maker’, making all of the same ‘kind’ – or kin.

That this connotation first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century suggests a relationship between the emphasis on equality occurring in America and France at this time and the politicisation of brotherly relations: fraternity was used as a metaphor for nationalist ideals. One of the best-known mottos of the French Revolution, ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’, placed the concept of brotherhood alongside qualities such as freedom, egalitarianism, democracy – and nationalism.⁹

⁹ Thomas Paine, meanwhile, writing to incite rebellion against British rule in America, emphasised common social origins in *The Rights of Man* (1791) and *Common Sense* (1776): ‘Mankind being

It is in this period that brotherhood first takes on an overtly political – even nationalistic – slant; that this slogan became the French motto only at the end of the nineteenth century demonstrates the continued political adoption of fraternal relations throughout the century, and the tightening relationship between brotherhood and nationalism.¹⁰ The rhetoric associated with brotherhood was of a naturally-shared aim, social status and nation; it became a celebrated relationship. This kind of brotherhood demonstrates equality through a common origin, despite a lack of immediate consanguineous ties: Isaac Disraeli, father of Benjamin, wrote of ‘the common brotherhood of man’ (215) in 1841.

Yet this leads us towards a further form of brotherhood which is more overtly problematic; to which we do not belong by nature, but through active *subscription*: this is a brotherhood formed through the need to become a member or an associate of a formal, communal activity, in order to participate in it. This brotherhood is also dominated by a need to belong, yet in a more contrived way. Political Brotherhood groups, such as the ones which Heckethorn deemed to threaten Britain and the examples that we find in Stevenson’s works, are a form of secret society which claim a belief in these universal qualities of mankind, yet, by doing this, they pronounce themselves ‘the enemies of this unjust and doomed society’ (*The Dynamiter*, 91) and thus find their own meaning and purpose in relation to a defined opponent. Members, as we will see in more detail later on, actively join this group in order to participate in its activities and beliefs: the Carbonari, for example, fought for an independent Italy and for the commonality of its citizens; the Fenian Brotherhood for

originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance’ (*Common Sense*, 11).

¹⁰ ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’ was made the official motto during the Third Republic (1870-1940).

an independent Ireland. The term ‘Brotherhood’, indeed, had become so synonymous with ‘secret society’ by the Victorian period that Wilkie Collins named the clandestine group (presumably the Carbonari) seeking Italian independence of which Count Fosco and Professor Pesca are members in *The Woman in White* (1859-60) simply ‘The Brotherhood’.

However, this kind of Brotherhood contains an inescapable flaw: by joining a Brotherhood, the group itself is formed through exclusivity – and thus exclusion – thereby deserting all notions of universal equality. Most immediately, for example, the concept of fraternity creates a male homosocial space, excluding women from political movements and thought. The rhetoric, and apparent structure, of equality which comes with the word ‘brotherhood’ is used by political Brotherhoods in a highly artificial environment. Brotherhood groups desert all of the utopian notions which they stand for, by their very existence: Brotherhood is only a ‘brotherhood’ of those *in* the Brotherhood. As soon as a fraternal group is formed it immediately contradicts any ideal of equality to which it claims; yet it also requires this separation to exist as a Brotherhood in the first place. Somerset claims that, ‘I held at one time very liberal opinions, and should certainly have joined a secret society if I had been able to find one’ (*The Dynamiter*, 96), subscription to an exclusive secret society is not an example of liberality at all, and he could consider himself fortunate that the societies he sought were ironically that bit too secret to be discovered.

Jacques Derrida, to whom we shall refer later on in this chapter, analyses the contradictions in the term in *The Politics of Friendship* (1997), and recognises that fraternity is not as inclusive as it may seem. He asks: ‘what is meant when one says “brother”, when someone is called “brother”. [...] What is the political impact and

range of this chosen word, among other possible words, even – and especially – if the choice is not deliberate?’ (305). And, as John D. Caputo puts it: ‘What are the consequences, especially the political consequences, of making the “brother” the exemplar of the friend and community?’ (‘Who is Derrida’s Zarathustra?’, 185). Derrida seeks to ‘de-naturalize the figure of the brother, his authority, his credit, his phantasm’ (*Politics of Friendship*, 159): the idea that political Brotherhoods in some way act on behalf of a nation or are instilled with the ‘natural’ bonds and freedoms of consanguineous brotherhood is problematic. As this chapter will demonstrate, the contradictions inherent within brotherhood itself become both a burden to the supposedly ‘natural’ consanguineous family and an asset to the simulated, political Brotherhood.

Fraternity is depicted as a simultaneously uniting and destructive relationship in Stevenson’s writing. With its increasingly political meaning clearly exposed during the French Revolution, ‘brotherhood’ came to represent both the unification of common man, as well as the exclusion of him: one of the characteristics of fraternity – of shared, brotherly relations – is separation. As we will see, fraternal relations need a sense of distance to *be* fraternal. This duality associated with brotherhood remains evident in both the domestic and political spheres in Stevenson’s texts: in *The Master of Ballantrae*, blood brotherhood seemingly provides a natural bond, yet it is also by nature ‘unnaturally’ dangerous and disintegrating. Political groups such as the Fenian Brotherhood, conversely, depended on an elite and exclusive atmosphere to both further their causes of apparent equality and to maintain unity within their ranks. Brotherhood relations in Stevenson’s work, as this chapter aims to display, have no claims to the ‘natural’,

and both their consanguineous and political form reveal a similar need for exclusivity and exclusion: they require a sense of strangeness within their familial bond.

Stevenson exposes the tensions in brotherhood and the risks involved in swapping a blood brotherhood for a political one.

That brotherhood can be simulated at all presents further tensions within the concept. If brotherhood can be artificially generated, the blood ties to which the family clings become useless: familial relations can be based around other common bonds as well, such as politics, property, clubbing or friendship. The seemingly artificial form of fraternity overlaps with apparently ‘innate’, consanguineous brotherhood, questioning the form and construction of brotherly relations and very concept of the ‘natural’: *The Master of Ballantrae* shows that what should be natural is, in fact, political. While secret Brotherhoods clearly generate their own origin, as we will see in *The Dynamiter*, the focus on natural ancestry and the totemic-style family coat-of-arms of the disintegrating Duries in *The Master of Ballantrae* presents questions about their own position as ‘family’. *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Dynamiter* reveal what is at stake in these kinds of brotherhood relations, and in their borrowings: the synchronic, ‘horizontal’, self-generating and self-perpetuating organisation of secret Brotherhood borrows from the seemingly diachronic, ‘vertically’ organised relations of the consanguineous family. This chapter traces the transition – and overlap – of brotherhood ties from domestic, ‘natural’ relations to the artificial, with political motivations. It considers the fall of the House of Durrisdeer and its occupants and the implications of this on consanguineous brotherhood; following this, it goes on to look at the rise of the political Brotherhood

as an apparently more ‘real’, ‘natural’ form of kinship. Stevenson’s depiction of fraternal relations takes a topsy-turvy turn.

Re-collecting the family: ‘dark rows of portraits’

Before looking at the concept of brotherhood, let us turn to the consanguineous/conjugal family as a whole and to the difficult family relations in which James and Henry exist as brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae*. The Durie family is characterised by an unusual mixture of members: a weak father; an eldest son who declines his title; a younger son who seemingly murders his brother; a wife of one brother who loves the other; and a steward, who is preoccupied with being a part of the family and its grand history. Alan Sandison observes that:

The text concerns itself with a House or family whose head, the father, has apparently abdicated his authority, where the elder son is not in a position to step in and exercise it because, in fact, he does not officially exist having been proscribed by the country’s Government (whose own legitimacy has just been called into question, albeit unsuccessfully, by Charles Edward Stuart). This leaves the younger son, an uncharismatic ‘manager’ of the family’s estates, who, though he may marry his brother’s betrothed, will never fill his shoes *nor* win his father’s fullest blessing. Eventually, he does succeed his father and assumes the title of Lord Durisdeer, but the final dénouement is precipitated by news (embodied in a pamphlet which, we are told, while purporting to be fact is a work of fiction by a Whig trouble-maker) that James was to be pardoned and reinstated, thus (in the normal course of events) disinheriting Henry’s children. To prevent this, Henry arranges to have his brother murdered. (*Appearance of Modernism*, 273-4)

By all accounts, the Duries are a somewhat dysfunctional family. Characterised by members who do not play their traditional part, the Duries are a family in decline, reliant instead upon their former glories. In fact, the Durie family has all the consanguineous ancestry necessary to possess a large (inherited) estate and title. Yet as their home falls into disrepair and as the steward and narrator of their history, Mackellar, takes control of their estate, their reliance on blood-kin begins to take its

toll. It is their dependence on ‘natural’ kin and ancestry which causes problems for the Durie family. The failure of the Durie family demonstrates that blood does not bind kinship relations – there are no such things as ‘natural’ or ‘innate’, inherited kinship bonds – and that a reliance on this misplaced belief can be more trouble than it is worth. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, we witness the invasion of politics into the family; later on in *The Dynamiter* this will switch to quasi-familial relations invading politics. The Durie family relations, which they believe to be natural, are exposed by the rupture of the ’45 to be, in fact, dominated by other organising motivations, such as money, property and reputation.

The opening of Mackellar’s account documents a family divided by the rebellion of 1745. Making a tactical decision to divide his family between the Jacobite rebels and the Hanoverian government, Lord Durrisdere ‘was all for temporising’ (11), and sends one son out to fight for Charles while one remains at home and takes the other side.¹¹ As we have seen, Sandison claims that the text concerns ‘a House or family whose head, the father, has apparently abdicated his authority’ (*Appearance of Modernism*, 273): Lord Durrisdere’s weakness reveals the fragility of the family, which is now reliant upon its next, feuding, generation. Despite the family’s belief that ‘it was the cadet’s part to go out; [...] the Master, what with restlessness and vanity, would at no rate consent to stay at home’ (12): already, the frailty of the consanguineous line of the family becomes evident, as the Master refuses his responsibility as the eldest, and as heir to the House of Durrisdere.

Baffled at the Master’s resistance to their plans, Henry questions the possible

¹¹ In Alison Lumsden’s Derridean reading of *The Master of Ballantrae*, this division of the family is an example of the challenge to the framework of binary oppositions which the text presents: ‘Such a “middle course” inevitably breaks down the harsh binary oppositions between Jacobitism and Loyalism, suggesting that to see the rebellion as an unalterable sequence may be misleading’ (‘Travelling Hopefully’, 130).

outcome of a divided House: 'if I go, and the Prince has the upper hand, it will be easy to make your peace with King James. But if you go, and the expedition fails, we divide the right and the title. And what shall I be then?' (12). James's answer, that 'You will be Lord Durrissdeer' (12), displays no concern for the 'natural' line of the family. With the background events dictated by the confused consanguineous line of kings – 'Bonnie Prince Charlie's' unsuccessful attempt to restore the legitimate Jacobite line over the Hanoverian claim¹² – this problem of political inheritance also overshadows the private events of the Durie family.

However, the failure of the Duries has been cast long before the '45 and the problems that it brings: while Adrian Poole argues that 'the Duries are a family in search of history' (xv), they in fact depend on their long history – however confused or imaginary this may be – to justify and maintain their present state of stagnation. The obsession with kinship origins which, as we have seen, was a crucial topic in the nineteenth century, haunts the Durie family as well, and there is a clear wish to demonstrate their powerful ancestry. Indeed, this need to possess details of a lengthy lineage is evident from the first use of the phrase 'family tree' cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which was in 1807; the phrase continued throughout the nineteenth century, used by writers such as William Makepeace Thackeray.¹³ To identify one's ancient origins and family tree, it seems, gives the family a sort of validity: the family as a form becomes defined by the connections of which it

¹² Charles Edward Stuart was the second Jacobite claimant to the throne, as the son of James Francis Edward Stuart (who was the son of James II/VII). James II/VII, a Catholic, had been deposed in 1688, when the monarchy was replaced with the Protestant, Hanoverian, line. Charles Edward Stuart's claim, with the support of many of the Highland clans, was against the legitimacy of the claim of George II, the current reigning monarch, to the throne.

¹³ *Denis Duval* (1869) begins with a chapter entitled 'The Family Tree', in which the narrator claims he 'once drew a fine family tree of my ancestors', on which he sketched one member hanging from a branch (1). This action he claims is a joke; Duval is altering his family tree to make it more outrageous.

consists and gains its 'meaning' from the relations between and the position of its members, and these need not be from the present time. To root the family outwith its current troubles and to identify its earlier origins restores the sense of natural authority and authenticity which the family was supposed to exemplify: the idea of a 'tree' is indicative of some organic connection and origin binding members together.

And there is a similar desperation to demonstrate familial authenticity throughout *The Master of Ballantrae*, for the text begins with Mackellar (who is, of course, not a family member) going out of his way to prove the strength and depths of the family, whose property dates back to the Reformation; Mackellar cites a number of ballads and rhymes in which they are mentioned. Much of the family's local history is caught up in folklore and gossip – 'dim reference[s]' (7) – suggesting that, despite the narrator's protestations, the family's past is not well remembered. Not enough for the exacting Mackellar, however, this admission is followed by the strange statement that: 'Authentic history besides is filled with their exploits' (10). That the Durie family are documented in 'authentic' (presumably written), as well as indicatively 'inauthentic', history is evidently meant to add a sense of weight to their historical importance and to their very legitimacy as a family.

The Durie family, however, swiftly declines, demonstrating the perils of relying on blood kinship and ancestry for self-definition: what the family do not realise or understand, is that they are not related by blood, but through other organising structures, such as property and totemic-style emblems. The prominent placement of the family shield, for example, is an emblem of the family's apparent authority, used to demonstrate the present legitimacy of the family through its ancient roots. Like the totem, which Andrew Lang argued was a badge which all

members were to unite 'primitive' kinship group, from which, retrospectively, a 'myth of their descent' might be created (*Custom and Myth*, 262), the coat of arms enables the Durie family to look back on bygone days, through which they seek to define themselves. The Duries' myth, in which they continue to believe, is of the importance of their consanguineous relations themselves. This, traditionally upper class, form of identification thus contains assumptions which are very 'primitive'. When Alison throws the coin which decides the brothers' fate 'clean through the family shield in the great painted window' (13), the current, troubled position of the family interacts with its idealised, ancient form. Eric Massie argues that this event signifies two things: 'This obviously symbolic act, read simply on one level, indicates the destructive power of random action [...]. However, there is a paradox in Alison's throwing of the coin, since it is her fortune that will secure the estate' (169-70). Yet the most immediate result of this action is to expose the family itself: the hole in the coat of arms lays bare the myth of the family. The shield – and the family itself – is empty of meaning, conveying a skewed view of history and consanguineous ancestry: the important blood line of the Durie family, which the shield represents, is shown to be without value; merely another trope which helps to forge kinship ties. Irreparably damaged, the broken crest 'prevents both the burial of the past or the awakening of a new era' (Massie, 170): the Duries remain stuck in the present, because they depend on a mythical, and now unattainable, past.

The missing piece of glass which causes this realisation is viewed by Mackellar as an unruly fault in the room: 'the first thing I observed was a lozenge of clear glass in the midst of the shield in the painted window, which I remember thinking a blemish on a room otherwise so handsome, with its family portraits, and

the targeted ceiling with pendants, and the carved chimney' (19). Yet the way in which Mackellar expresses the disorder the coin causes is revealing: the hole in the shield looks wrong not only amidst the grandeur the House of Durrisdeer, but, specifically, amongst the 'family portraits'. The Duries have surrounded themselves with their past: family portraits lining the walls are a constant reminder of what and who they once were, and a means by which they still define themselves. Like anthropological narratives which look to examples of 'primitive' cultures to explain the current position of 'civilisation', the Durie family use their past family forms to explain their present condition. James also uses his ancestry as a justification and expectation of his 'natural' dues: when Mackellar becomes master of his finances and gives him money only in moderation, he states that James 'looked about the hall at the dark rows of portraits. "In the name of my ancestors, I thank you," says he' (147). The portraits alone, to the Master, should be justification of his own lenient treatment in the present: there is no need for action, as the family passively relies upon its ancestry. The lozenge of glass from the broken coat of arms is seen to pollute a room full of such portraits: it is a reminder of the fragility of a dependence on such lineage. Kinship organisation is arbitrary: the Duries do not need their consanguineous relations, and could just as easily organise themselves around their – empty – coat of arms.

The emphasis on property in *The Master of Ballantrae*, meanwhile, further demonstrates the worthlessness of blood ties to the family. While we considered the relationship between kinship and property in David Balfour's adventures in *Kidnapped* (1886) in the second chapter, we should note that here, too, the Durie family is constantly aligned with its hereditary seat, the House of Durrisdeer. Henry,

as we saw above, is concerned about the division of property should the wrong side triumph during the rebellions; the Master, on the other hand, does not appear to be troubled. Throughout the text, the deteriorating condition of the House of Durrisdeer reflects on the family as a whole: blood does not hold this family together, despite what its members may believe; instead, symbols of its history and grandeur – such as its coat of arms, and its property – serve as totemic authorities. The family is not, as they believe, bound by their ancestry, but by the practical and exchangeable circulation of commodities in the present. Like the House of Shaws under the wrongful control of Ebenezer, as the family falls into disarray so does the House of Durrisdeer: in order to finance his brother's malicious extravagance, Henry must sell the family's land and reduce the cost of the property's upkeep; yet this is mistaken by his wife and father for parsimony. It is Mackellar, who is entirely unrelated to the family, who maintains not only the finances and state of the property, but also the familial relations: 'if you can think my patron miserly after that [sending eight thousand pounds to the Master], this shall be my last interference' (67). The final breakdown in father-son relations – and in *future* father-son relations – comes when the entail is broken (at the expense of Henry's heir – '[f]or the rest of the family it spelled ruin') in order to sell off parts of land to finance James's exile: 'considering the cruel falseness of the position in which I stand to my brother, and that you, my lord, are my father, and have the right to command me, I set my hand to this paper' (85). From this moment onwards the Durie family estate can only be a part of what it used to be. The House of Durrisdeer represents not only the current condition of the Durie family, but it remains lurking in the background as a reminder of what they will – or have – become.

Yet it is after the duel, in which Henry apparently kills James, that the most revealing observation about the family is made. As Lord Durrissdeer seeks to avoid scandal, Mackellar notes:

I saw he had fallen, like the rest of us, to think mainly of the house. Now that all the living members of the family were plunged in irremediable sorrow, it was strange how we turned to that conjoint abstraction of the family itself, and sought to bolster up the airy nothing of its reputation: not the Duries only, but the hired steward himself. (106)

Here, the steward takes a step back from his usual immersion within the Durie family to recognise it in its abstract form. The Duries, as a family ‘united’ by consanguineous ties, do not exist; they are a kinship group joined by romanticised origins and a constant reliance on property, reputation and previous members’ actions, through which they can define themselves. As a backward-looking group, therefore, it is unsurprising that the family fails: any future generations will be unable to define themselves successfully through their recent past – the family feud of the ’45 – and the gap this leaves would cause them to cease to exist. This is, of course, eventually what happens, and the tale of the Duries is consigned to myth and folklore: ‘The succession would seem to be moving through one abdication to another and since we are told at the beginning that neither Alexander nor Katherine marries, the decline is to end in the family’s “deletion”’ (Sandison, *Appearance of Modernism*, 306). The family’s dependence on the ‘airy nothing of its reputation’ leads it to, eventually, dissolve into thin air itself.

As a result, the most family-like member of the Durie family is their steward, Mackellar: ‘While all the family members contend (and fail) to secure authority and legitimacy, the vacuum is filled by the hired steward, the “stranger”’ (Sandison, *Appearance of Modernism*, 306). In line with many studies of eighteenth and

nineteenth century representations of the household, employees such as servants, maids and governesses were now forming an extended family below stairs.¹⁴ Mackellar's fidelity to the family – and his odd devotion to both enemy-brothers – even takes him to the American wilderness. Throughout the text, he maintains a concern for the family, its estates and its success, which consanguineous members do not: it is Mackellar's influence which sustains the family beyond its 'natural' life-span. Mackellar tells Alison that 'I belong to Durrisdeer [...] as if I had been born there' (115); he deems himself to be a family member. Furthermore, he is treated as a family member by Henry and, later in their adventures, by James as well. Henry encourages Mackellar to sit with the family in the evenings, and he counters James's demands that the steward should collect his luggage by distinguishing him from other household workers: 'We are constantly troubling you: would you be so good as send one of the servants?' (75). Mackellar is given charge of the family finances by Henry, with which he controls James (147), and he even intends to sit at the head of the table (146); moreover, he deigns to inform James – the consanguineous heir to the family title – that he is no longer a part of the Durie family: 'I could never forget that you were, after all, a member of the family' (146). Mackellar un-enrols James from his family: family, he suggests, is a relationship which can simply disappear, and which relies on values and behaviour rather than any innate connection. A new culture of allegiance and loyalty, rather than more passive, inherited blood relations, overtakes the Durie family to form its complex and transient kinship bonds.

Perfect friendship: 'the deadliest tragedy of fratricide'

¹⁴ For example, see Claudia Nelson, *Family Ties in Victorian England* (2007) and Ruth Brandon, *Other People's Daughters* (2008).

Emerging from this family realisation that there is nothing ‘natural’ about kinship ties are the brothers, James and Henry. As brothers, the two warring siblings are, as we have seen, exemplars of democratic friendship, for fraternal relations are also used as a model of egalitarian communal values. While this is, of course, somewhat ironic in the case of James and Henry, who are engaged in a fight to the death throughout the text, it is through their fraternal hatred that we can explore the problems with this idealisation of brotherhood and the essentially non-democratic, exclusive characteristics and distance of the (br)other. In fact, as this section will consider, it is the Durie brothers’ very enmity which enables them to exist *as* brothers. And while Henry and James are engaged in a seemingly ‘unnatural’ fraternal war, Derrida demonstrates in *The Politics of Friendship* that brotherly relations are not ‘natural’ at all. As such, it is surprising that fraternity is held up as an example of ideal friendship, an ideal of democratic, equal and inclusive relations: Caputo observes that ‘[t]he interesting and dangerous thing is that this is consistently taken as the model for democracy’ (189). By considering the position of the brother as the exemplar of the friend, Derrida questions the implications of this for the idea of a democratic brotherhood; as the Durie brothers demonstrate, there is nothing natural about fraternal relations. James and Henry have been considered by critics to be an example of interdependent doubles of the same being,¹⁵ yet rather than emphasising their brotherly proximity to each other their fraternal relationship is, in fact, characterised by distance.

¹⁵ Julia Reid and Joseph J. Egan emphasise the interdependence of the brothers’ personalities: ‘they desperately need each other’s complementary characteristics’ (*Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 131) and ‘each needs the other for survival and fulfilment: James embodies grace, charm, and spontaneity, but is devoid of the steadfast reliability and essential orderliness which at the novel’s outset characterized Henry’s nature; Henry, in turn, lacks the romance and vitality so evident in his brother’ (Egan, 704).

Penny Fielding's recent work on the Derridean interpretation of friendship considers the troubled relationship between James and Henry as a model of the ideal friendship ('Stevenson's Friendships'); it is by using Fielding's analysis that this section will consider the strangeness which characterises the Durie brothers' fraternal bond. Derrida's work considers the distance which is necessary to friendship, for while love for a person suggests a desire to be one with that person until death – thus risking the possibility of self-love and narcissism – friendship is a regard which remains separate by recognising that the friend does *not* want to become their friend: Derrida suggests that we need to recognise the friend as Other. And as Geoffrey Bennington explains: 'this structure generates a paradox whereby the distance [...] involved in friendship, can always make it look as though the best friendship is the *most* distant [...]. I am my friend's friend to the extent that I do *not* try to become one with him' (112). The ideal friend becomes an example of the absolute other; a friend, for Derrida, requires this sense of distance: 'I could not love friendship without engaging myself, *without feeling myself in advance* engaged to love the other beyond death. Therefore, beyond life. I feel myself – and in advance, before any contract – *borne* to love the dead other' (12). The distance – and even lack of physical presence – of the friend is the very condition of friendship. And this distance and, therefore, this friendship continues, and even becomes strongest, upon the death of the other as a friend. Thus, as Fielding explains, 'one friend will live on to memorialise the other' ('Stevenson's Friendships'); true friends do not wish to become one with the other, but require this separation which, in its most absolute form, exists as the complete absence of death. Friendship occurs through memorialisation: the friend only exists in this acknowledgement of their – now

uncrossable – distance; it is not proximity which renders a person a friend.

Friendship is, in this sense, a form of mourning; it both grieves its absolute distance while depending on it.

If, like Derrida, we consider the use of the term ‘brother’ as the exemplar of the friend, we can see this model of friendship as distance, and even mourning, clearly in operation in *The Master of Ballantrae*. Mackellar, for example, describes the beyond-death tie of the Durie brothers, be it in enmity or in friendship:

Dead or alive (and he was then supposed to be dead) that man [James] was his brother’s [Henry’s] rival: his rival abroad, where there was never a good word for Mr Henry, and nothing but regret and praise for the Master; and his rival at home, not only with his father and his wife, but with the very servants. (21)

We will consider the, seemingly ‘unnatural’, intense rivalry between the brothers below. Yet what is of interest in this sentence is that the relationship between the two continues beyond death. Rather than being doubles of the same being, Henry and James are poles apart and Henry is constantly haunted by his hatred for his brother, even after it seems that he has died. And as a result, following the apparent death of James, Henry becomes a memorialisation of his brother – a recognition of their distance – for Henry takes his position in the household, marries Alison, his intended bride and takes on his responsibilities to the mother of his illegitimate child. Yet none of these tasks are fulfilled successfully, providing constant reminders of the differences – not the similarities – between the brothers. Henry’s very existence from the duel onwards is characterised by mourning for the (necessary) distance between him and his brother.

Yet, as we can also see from this passage, with the best friendship now found at the furthest limits, the ideal friend also takes on a form of absolute hatred. The

perfect friend – the absolute other – is, paradoxically, either the dead friend or the enemy: both provide the distance which is necessary for ideal friendship. And it is here that the contradictory position of the Durie brothers as ‘fraternal enemies’, as Stevenson describes them in his Dedication (and as they are referred to on their shared gravestone), takes shape. As brothers, Henry and James are, as we have seen, models for an idealised friendship; yet to be exemplars of absolute friendship this must mean that they also recognise the absolute distance needed for such a relationship. The Master, for example, tells Henry that: ‘I have hated you all my life’ (94). The brothers have been born in to their fraternal tie, and thus into hatred, and are absolute enemies: this is the very condition *of* their brotherhood. And it is by occupying these polarities that the brothers become an example of the perfect friendship: as Fielding explains, ‘Henry’s hatred for James transforms them from brothers into, paradoxically, friends’ (‘Stevenson’s Friendships’).

The brother inhabits the impossible position of both absolute friendship and enmity, simultaneously: James and Henry occupy both states of allies and rivals, and are brother friends *and* foes. It is this very duality that they depend upon, for to be brothers in the first place – and thus exemplars of friendship – they must accept this absolute distance of (br)otherhood, which is expressed through hatred. Thus, ‘[t]here can be absolute hostility only *for* a brother’ (Derrida, 148), as it is only brothers who can participate in this absolute form of friendship and the simultaneous unification and distance that it requires. Stevenson wrote that *The Master of Ballantrae* explored a ‘dead genuine human problem – human tragedy, I should say rather’ (*Letters* 6: 86); this tragedy we can interpret to be the problematic relationship which constitutes brotherhood. It is from this perspective, therefore, that we must consider

Henry and James: brotherly foes who inhabit the problems of the dual nature of brotherhood (as we will see most clearly in the duel), and destined to engage in absolute friendship, and thus absolute hatred.

To demonstrate this perfect friendship is to declare absolute enmity for the object of this friendship. Derrida explains that:

The two concepts (friend/enemy) consequently intersect and ceaselessly change places. They intertwine, as though they loved each other, all along a spiralled hyperbole [...], the true enemy, is a better friend than the friend. For the enemy can hate or wage war on me in the name of friendship, *for Friendships sake*, out of friendship for friendship [...]. (72)

The rift between James and Henry is, paradoxically, evidence of their friendship.

And it is as friends/enemies that the brothers become consumed by each other: their hatred becomes a fixation, which functions like friendship; they both repel and

follow each other to and from the House of Durrisdeer, and eventually to America.

Each haunts the other with his friendship/enmity, no matter what the consequences.

Accordingly, in *The Master of Ballantrae*, blood relations become unnatural as we witness a rejection of the sense of sameness based on blood. While they should be united through their shared blood, the Master becomes a vampire of his own family and their estates (which, as we have seen, is one of the true reasons for the family to gather), as he increasingly turns on his own kind – despite the fact that this includes himself. As he extracts growing amounts of money from the House of Durrisdeer, Mackellar exclaims: ‘This was in 1756. You are to suppose that for seven years this bloodsucker had been drawing the life’s blood from Durrisdeer, and that all this time my patron had held his peace’ (65). The Master’s leeching off the estates harms Henry’s ability to run them and his lifestyle and, as a result, the Master’s own situation: as we have seen, the success of the family is bound up in the state of its

property. He is repeatedly referred to as a parasite, yet Henry is aware of the self-destructive elements of his brother's actions: 'he knows the estate to be incompetent; but I will give him what I have [...]. If I ruin the estate and go barefoot, I shall stuff this bloodsucker. Let him ask all – all, and he shall have it! It is his by rights' (62-3). Both are preoccupied with fraternal hatred rather than safeguarding the estates, and thus their familial relationships.

Fraternal relations, as we saw in the introduction to this chapter, require a sense of Otherness: to have a brother is not simply to share a familial origin, but also to acknowledge a need for difference. In *The Master of Ballantrae* this Otherness appears in the form of brotherly hatred. The climax of the brothers' hatred and the beginning of their out-and-out war is the duel, even though it occurs early in the text. Stevenson himself described this as the 'tragedy' of the story: 'he comes and lives with them, whence flows the real tragedy, the nocturnal duel of the brothers' (*Letters* 6: 105). The duel in the shrubbery demonstrates the ultimate manifestation of the deadly dilemma of brotherhood: their absolute hatred is exhibited in their willingness to kill the other; yet, perversely, this absolute enmity also exemplifies their perfect friendship. Derrida explains that: 'if [the friend] desires my death, at least he desires it, perhaps, him, mine, singularly' (72). Unbeknown to the brothers, their desire for the other's death is, in fact, an indication of their bond. This dilemma is evident in the two brothers' entirely different reactions to the events of the duel: Henry's belief that he has killed his brother leads him to beg: 'you know I loved him; you know I loved him in the beginning; I could have died for him – you know that! I would have given my life for him and you.' (106). Henry, as we saw above, lives on to grieve for the absence of the (br)other. Yet the Master's comment to Henry, which is cited

in the title of this chapter, is telling: 'I have hated you all my life' (94), he exclaims, before the duel. The birth of this brotherhood brings both friendship – 'I loved him in the beginning' – and, inevitably, hatred and a battle to the death. James's life, it seems, has been occupied with this kind of hostility to his brother; he *needs* his hatred for his brother in order to exist *as* a brother; it is the natural-unnatural condition of the brother.

Blood and shared roots, on which we have already seen the Durie family to be over-dependent, are, therefore, destructive forces in *The Master of Ballantrae*. References to blood are rife throughout the 'Account Of All That Passed On The Night of February 27th, 1757'. Demonstrative of the inevitable self-destruction of consanguineous brotherhood, this chapter is full of bloodshed, and the fear of blood. The Master 'must have blood, I must have blood for this' (94), and he is seemingly killed while cheating in the duel, proved by the fact that his left hand is 'all bloody' (96). Mackellar, meanwhile, instructs Mrs Henry to 'Take care of the blood', at which she 'started violently back' (105). Blood is both a unifying element in *The Master of Ballantrae*, and a symbol of inevitable destruction. The end of the text sees the Master prophecy that '[b]lood will out' (177), and Mackellar owns that 'the air smelt blood to me' (178): the brothers cannot escape their destruction as, to Mackellar, they are even breathing it. Yet, as brothers joined by blood who acknowledge each other *as* Other, in plotting to destroy one another, they are, in fact, demonstrating their absolute friendship for one another.

The duality of fraternal relations is inherent and inescapable and, in *The Master of Ballantrae*, brotherhood implodes as it teeters between two conflicting feelings. By demonstrating their absolute love, James and Henry inevitably die, and

are buried in the same grave. That they die in unison demonstrates the simultaneous success and failure that these brotherhood relations have become: by dying together they maintain the absolute Otherness – death – required for their shared, fraternal relations. Yet that this friendly enmity comes at the price of joint-death displays the unnerving and impossible union that brotherhood offers. Fielding observes that their simultaneous deaths – where each appears to have died before the other – resolve the problem of memorialisation through friendship (‘Stevenson’s Friendships’); it is in this mutual death that they are relieved of the need for the (br)other while also remaining Other forever. And this is also shown through their shared gravestone which Mackellar must erect: neither brother ends up memorialising the other, and, as the memorial paradoxically claims, they therefore ‘[LIE] HERE FORGOTTEN’ (219). The perfect friendship is characterised by such enmity that both brothers must eliminate the other; as such, they are remembered on their gravestone to be the ‘FRATERNAL ENEMY’ (219) of one another; this is a condition of brotherhood.¹⁶ James and Henry, therefore, bear out what Derrida terms ‘the deadliest tragedy of fratricide’: Derrida claims that: [t]he figure of the absolute enemy [...] starts to resemble that of the absolute friend: the deadliest tragedy of fratricide’ (151). It is their very (br)otherness which calls for their absolute hatred, and, ultimately, their unification and distance in joint death is the culmination of their friendship/enmity.

In fact, their shared death comes to resemble the one-ness of love:

Bennington explains that ‘love just is the fantasy of dying *with* someone, rather than dying alone’ (113). Yet this appearance of love is, in fact, the culmination of their

¹⁶ Fielding considers the meaning of these words in *Writing and Orality* (1996): ‘Does this mean that James and Henry were brothers who were enemies, or that they were brotherly, in the sense of friendly, enemies? Or, given the repeated doublings between the brothers, should Mackellar’s frequent associations of James with the devil be extended to Henry? The inscription would then suggest that brothers were alike in enmity, not of each other, but of humanity’ (177).

paradoxical fraternal bond: they die together experiencing not the unity of love, but the absolute Otherness of death, for in death they will always remain apart. Margaret Oliphant anticipated this idea in her review of *The Master of Ballantrae* in

Blackwood's Magazine in 1889:

The two brothers are thus brought at the end of their protracted struggle almost to an equality in guilt as well as misery for it is Henry who at last in his madness hires the villainous crew who drive his brother to desperation; and they die together in a supreme horror, in the intense and unyielding hatred which unites them like love. (Maixner, 367)

Brotherhood carries out this 'protracted struggle' as a very condition of its fraternity:

born into their position as blood brothers, James and Henry feel both friendship and hatred for the (br)other, and it is this feeling that they rely on to *be* brothers.

Ultimately, their absolute enmity reveals their fraternal relation: brotherhood ties are not an example of perfect equality. In fact, as Fielding argues, 'Stevenson [...] looks at the disastrous consequences of taking fraternity as a model for the community based on friendship and equality' ('Stevenson's Friendships'). Consanguineous fraternity is, from the outset, destined to follow a course of distance and enmity, in order for it to exist; the mutual hatred of the Durie brothers and the failure of their fraternal bonds both reveals the problems inherent within the concept of brotherhood and is evidence of their fraternal success.

Secret Brotherhood: 'That oath is all my history'

As brotherhood requires distance and inequality, Derrida questions the consequences of lifting fraternal relations from the family as a model for democratic group relations. Mid-way through *The Politics of Friendship*, he indulges in an internal dialogue with himself about the status of the brother:

- But I ask you, what is a brother?
- Yes, what is a brother? Is one born a brother?
- The question seems ridiculous, dear friend. Of course.
- Not likely. Have you encountered brothers in nature? In nature and in so-called animal births? Fraternity requires a law and names, symbols, a language, engagements, oaths, speech, family and nation. (149)

Here, Derrida takes issue with the possibility of a ‘natural’, blood brother; instead, brotherhood engages with the political and is always formed through some kind of considered ‘alliance’ (149) of exclusivity and inequality. Fraternity requires oaths, rituals and shared national ideals; fraternal relations become calculated bonds of allegiance, and it is in political fraternities that we encounter these characteristics most explicitly.

We can see this form of political allegiance in James’s actions, for example. Having witnessed the failure of his own fraternal relations, James rejects Francis Burke’s offer of an idealised form of Brotherhood agreement between them. Burke recalls the conversation:

‘[...] either quarrel and be done; or make a sure bargain to bear everything at each other's hands.’

‘Like a pair of brothers?’ said I.

‘I said no such foolishness,’ he replied. ‘I have a brother of my own, and I think no more of him than of a colewort. But if we are to have our noses rubbed together in this course of flight, let us each dare to be ourselves like savages, and each swear that he will neither resent nor deprecate the other. [...]’

[...] ‘But which is it to be? Fight or make friends?’

‘Why,’ says he, ‘I think it will be the best manner to spin a coin for it.’

This proposition was too highly chivalrous not to take my fancy; and, strange as it may seem of two well-born gentlemen of to-day, we span a half-crown (like a pair of ancient paladins) whether we were to cut each other's throats or be sworn friends. (34-5)

James rejects the idealisation of brotherhood in favour of becoming ‘sworn friends’ – a relationship which is, of course, synonymous with fraternity.¹⁷ Both agree to assist the other; it is a pragmatic oath of allegiance they make. Yet both Burke and James recognise the duality which this relationship involves: there is no suggestion that they remain acquaintances, for to propose a fraternal loyalty to one another leaves the only alternative option of ‘cut[ting] each other’s throats’. This oath into which they have entered explicitly recognises both the friendship and enmity of their relationship.

A movement towards this kind of loyalty is clear in Stevenson’s works which involve secret societies. Clara Luxmore, for example, like the Master, abandons her consanguineous family for the apparently more worthy concept of political societies: ‘You will hardly credit me when I inform you that she ran away from home; yet such was the case. Some whim about oppressed nationalities—Ireland, Poland, and the like—has turned her brain’ (*The Dynamiter*, 81). Stronger than the bonds of consanguineous kinship, the kinship of political Brotherhood somehow becomes more credible than ‘real’, ‘authentic’ family relations: Clara overrides the authority of her family in favour of the idealised, political kinship of a secret society. Yet these fraternal relations are not exempt from the paradoxical nature of consanguineous brotherhood, as the role of the secret societies in *The Dynamiter* display: the Brotherhood relations found in the secret society also rely on the disparity evoked by the supposedly ‘equal’ relations of brotherhood, and the Brothers themselves also remain on the brink of absolute friendship and absolute hatred

¹⁷ Fielding’s analysis of this passage questions the relationship between friendship and fraternity, arguing that, while, on the one hand, ‘*Ballantrae* threatens to render all forms of social structuration absurd’, on the other, it also reveals the use of brotherhood as ‘a metaphor for idealised societies’ (‘Stevenson’s Friendships’).

towards one another. Yet while consanguineous brotherhood consumes itself under such conditions, political Brotherhood relations thrive. Having considered the contradictions inherent within consanguineous brotherhood in *The Master of Ballantrae*, we should now consider the extension of these familial ties to the idealised relations of political fraternity, which we encounter in the secret societies in *The Dynamiter*. While *The Master of Ballantrae* is a comprehensive case-study in the failure of fraternal relations and the deadly nature of brotherhood, it is in texts such as *The Dynamiter* that we witness a similar fraternal distance in a more openly politicised, manipulated, alternative (and satirical) depiction of brotherhood: the secret society.

As a group which is simultaneously known and unknown, the secret society immediately suggests conflicting, and even self-defeating, aims. Sissela Bok takes ‘concealment, or hiding, to be the defining trait of secrecy’ (6), suggesting that there is a determinate secret waiting to be revealed. The secret society problematises this by being a public structure: ‘society’ suggests the very opposite, a group of people joined by some common interest, location or class through inevitable connections.¹⁸ The societal structures of the secret society, however, are more formal and binding connections which serve to subordinate members to the clandestine club and uphold its appearance as an exclusive and desirable lifestyle: members of a secret society must take an oath of obedience to the group, undergo ritualistic initiation ceremonies as a rebirth into the new system and operate within a system of hierarchy and coded

¹⁸ Albert D. Pionke’s study of nineteenth century conspiracy and secret societies also seeks to avoid Bok’s definition: ‘Concentrating on the functions rather than the forms of secret societies at once obviates the tendency towards ferreting out *the* secret of a specific society and locates secret societies in general within the recently burgeoning critical discourse on nineteenth-century secrecy’ (xi). The secret society, he argues, occupies a ‘dialectic between condemnation and admiration’ in nineteenth century culture (xii). As a result, Pionke defines the secret society as: ‘a social institution for which the practice of concealment forms an essential part of its praxis and/or self-definition’ (xv).

signals. Both secret and existing only in collective form, the very term ‘secret society’ is thus something of a contradiction: how can something be simultaneously secret, or hidden and isolated, and societal, and thus exposed and connected? While the sharing of a secret in the outer society would spell the loss of the secret, the act of exposure within a secret society thus serves to reinforce the secret: Bok argues that, ‘What unites [secret societies] is not any one purpose or belief. It is, rather, secrecy itself’ (46).

And it is this secrecy which enables both the common sense of purpose amongst the society’s members, and the simultaneous exclusion of the world outside. As Clawson explains: ‘the exclusion of some people effects the incorporation of others and bestows a common identity upon them’ (248). Fraternal equality extends to members only; it is this dynamic which enables the secret society to exist *as* a society. What is more, political Brotherhoods make use of additional unifying factors, which become stronger than the bonds of blood: members are united by the participation in a secret and, more than this, the rules to which they agree which guard this secret from non-members. Brotherhood, therefore, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, is characterised by both a perceived equality amongst its subscribers, and yet also a clear separation between those inside the Brotherhood and those outside: Brotherhood both relies on and excludes the Other, outer world. Georg Simmel noted that: ‘Within the secret society, there often is a brotherly equality among the members’ (374). Yet these members are not brothers – merely borrowing from the seemingly appropriate rhetoric of fraternity – and the apparent ‘equal’ relations which they share in do not extend to the outer world. As we saw above, James and Henry find themselves in the inescapable position of brothers, and

are both united and separated in both life and death; the politicised form of Brotherhood relations witnesses this Derridean problem extended to the secret society as a whole, which questions what it means to participate in a, supposedly equal, fraternal relationship.

The Fenian Brotherhood was a secret society operating at the time Stevenson was writing: while other groups, such as the Carbonari, were across the Channel, the Fenian Brotherhood was a British group (of course, fighting not to be) which had also spread to America, and was increasingly found closer to home on English soil. John Newsinger contends that they were ‘one of the most important of the revolutionary movements that challenged the British Empire in the nineteenth century’ (1). While ‘Fenian Brotherhood’ was the American name for the society, in Ireland they were more commonly known as the ‘Irish Republican Brotherhood’ (MacManus, 612f), yet both are often used interchangeably.¹⁹ With their key aim to create an Irish Republic, the method which the Fenians used was, at first glance, entirely destructive: the Fenian Brotherhood became known for using dynamite. K. R. M. Short argues that this is one of the first examples of terrorism and the secret society moving into dangerous territory: ‘Terrorism developed in the late 1870s as a method by which an organised group sought to achieve its objectives through the systematic use of violence’ (2).²⁰ After an initial, failed rebellion in 1867, in which a

¹⁹ In fact, the Fenian Brotherhood was more successful than its Irish counterparts. As Heckethorn states, ‘In Ireland the Brotherhood never attained to the dimensions it reached in the United States, and without the assistance of the latter could do nothing’ (1st Ed., 2: 201).

²⁰ This new terrorist approach generated fear and paranoia throughout the period, generating rumours and filling newspaper columns with speculation. Short explains that:

The list of rumoured plots was endless, ranging from blowing up the Crystal Palace to bombs in the watermains, putting the street hydrants (water-plugs) out of action by filling them with strong cement, attacks on the Tower of London and Woolwich Arsenal, cutting the Atlantic Telegraph cable and blowing up ironworks. One letter threatened the life of the queen in appalling grammar and rumours had two men on their way to the Isle of Wight to blow up Osborne House. (16)

Fenian group attempted to free a colleague from Clerkenwell Prison, they began a series of bombing campaigns in London in the early 1880s.²¹ Sandison notes that: ‘In the year of the publication of *The Dynamiter* bombs went off in the Tower of London, Westminster Hall and the House of Commons’ (*Appearance of Modernism*, 114). The explosion which prompted Stevenson’s *Dedication* took place on 14 January 1885, at Westminster Hall: ‘miraculously injuries were limited to the constable at the top of the Crypt stairs and the unfortunate Constable Cole’ (Short, 208). The Brotherhood which the Fenians claimed was an exclusive belief which very clearly did not extend to the outside world.

Stevenson himself was shocked by the use of dynamite: in 1885 he wrote, ‘now, to have a dynamiter lynched, and all would be for the best in the best of possible worlds’ (*Letters* 5: 73). Condemning the ‘ugly devil of crime’, which Police Officers Cole and Cox had attempted to prevent in 1885, Stevenson went on to claim that: ‘It were a waste of ink to do so in a serious spirit’ (*The Dynamiter*, xiii). Yet *The Dynamiter* remains preoccupied with political Brotherhood groups and, in fact, documents not one, but four manifestations of the secret society: the Irish bombing group; Challoner’s unsuspecting involvement with the group; the secret Mormon

The Fenians and their violent methods clearly captured the public’s attention and imagination: a new problem arising from secret societies and terrorism was the uncertainty and rumours which they caused.

²¹ *The Times* is full of stories about Fenian scandals in the 1870s and 1880s. Many of the attempted explosions they report are only bomb-scares: ‘Another Fenian outrage was attempted yesterday at Liverpool, fortunately without success’. An unnamed witness had apparently noticed that smoke ‘had been issuing from the mouth of the bag, and the fizzing of a lighted fuse inside was distinctly heard’ (‘Another Fenian outrage’, 11). Another article details a ‘Threatened Fenian Outrage’, and the lengths gone to to ensure that the Midland Railway was protected: ‘The result was that the most elaborate arrangements were made to have all the line and the buildings watched from London to Leicester, Birmingham, and the Midland counties. These arrangements were made with the utmost secrecy, and the men were detailed for this special duty without anyone knowing the nature of the work they were to perform’ (5). In order to counter the efforts of the Fenians, the police themselves had to form a kind of secret society: each becomes an echo of the other, fighting secrecy with secrecy, generating problems about who is policing whom.

community in ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ and the republican secret society in the ‘Narrative of the Spirited Old Lady’. Generations of the Luxmore family, it seems, are being inescapably scooped up into secretive activities as the same story is performed again and again in different contexts – not forgetting, of course, to drag along our hapless heroes, Desborough, Challoner and Somerset, with them. *The Dynamiter*, accordingly, is a bleakly comedic portrayal of nihilism and London life of ‘[p]ersons brimful of secrets, persons pining for affection, persons perishing for lack of help or counsel’ (66); a compendium of stories within stories, seemingly without beginning or end. For a text about a secret Brotherhood, this is fitting: as we shall see, members of the Brotherhood groups sacrifice both their past and their future for their new, idealised, fraternal relations: the structure of *The Dynamiter* performs its plot. This is not a text specifically about Irish bombing groups, but it concerns the circularities and oppositions within familial relations themselves, as the following chapter will also consider.

It becomes clear within *The Dynamiter* that Brotherhood generates a system of apparent equality (within the secret society) through artificial means. Other groups which Stevenson depicts have a visible emblem – similar to that of the Durie family’s coat of arms – through which their unity can be made manifest: a farm-hand in *Prince Otto* unsuspectingly tells the Prince himself of his allegiance to a republican group by showing him his rather unsubtle membership badge: ‘I am myself affiliated. O, yes, I am a secret society man, and here is my medal’; the narrator explains that this had the ‘imprint of a Phoenix and the legend *Libertas*’ (20). One method of generating equality is to give all members an identical defining characteristic, such as the badge. Yet the most defining aspect of Brotherhood is its

oath, which features in *The Dynamiter*. While the family in *The Master of Ballantrae* are discovering that their myth of origin – the authenticity of blood relations – is shattered, Brotherhood looks to the inauthentic to generate its familial relations. Brotherhood openly reverts to a simulated form of kinship which unites the group, and from which a myth of origin can be created. This natural-unnatural ‘birth’ of ‘equal’ Brotherhood permits it to stand apart from the rest of society and provides the distance which we have seen fraternal relations to require; it would not exist as a Brotherhood without this segregation.

Derrida, indeed, argues that there is nothing ‘natural’ about brotherly relations: ‘The relation to the brother engages from the start with the order of the oath, or credit, of belief and of faith. The brother is never a fact’ (159). Brotherhood requires some initial oath or understanding to keep those who participate in these relations separate from the outside world. And as soon as it does this, of course, it becomes an exclusive, non-democratic, unequal social form. While fraternal relations like those in *The Master of Ballantrae* masquerade as ‘natural’, ‘innate’ relations, and make a point of their shared mutual consanguineous ancestry and their similarities to one another, secret Brotherhoods therefore appear to participate in a far more open form of fraternity, which recognises the exclusion by which the relationship is characterised and merely borrows the rhetoric of the brother. The secret society’s oath, for example, is crucial: this is a form of Brotherhood which comes with pre-accepted rules. The Fenian Brotherhood, for example, was bound by oath to secrecy and compliance. Seumas MacManus explains that their oath went as follows:

I, A B, do solemnly swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that I will do my utmost, at every risk, while life lasts, to make Ireland an independent

democratic Republic; that I will yield implicit obedience, in all things not contrary to the law of God, to the commands of my superior officers, and that I shall preserve inviolable secrecy regarding all transactions of this secret society that may be confided to me. So help me God! Amen. (612f)

The group turns its brother-members into homogenous automatons: not only should they be obedient, but this submission should be ‘implicit’, a part of their very being. These attributes now become a natural part of a Fenian Brother’s mental constitution: as a result, the secret society should become an impenetrable machine. While the oath does not state the consequences if it is broken, the implication is that a transgressing member would risk death: the group is not only united by a communal purpose, but also a common fear.

While a sworn member becomes a sworn Brother, and shares the common goals of ‘an independent and democratic Republic’, there remain problems with this ideal of democracy. In *The Dynamiter*, the assassin in the ‘Narrative of the Spirited Old Lady’ joins a republican secret society, yet he is caught out in the midst of an assignment to assassinate Prince Florizel. In his confession to the prince, he compares his initial idealism to the reality of his secret society:

I was born a hater of injustice; from my most tender years my blood boiled against Heaven when I beheld the sick, and against men when I witnessed the sorrows of the poor; the pauper’s crust stuck in my throat when I sat down to eat my dainties, and the crippled child has seen me weeping. What was there in that, but what was noble? and yet observe to what a fall these thoughts have led me! Year after year this passion for the lost besieged me closer. What hope was there in kings? what hope in these well-feathered classes that now roll in money? [...] Alas, your highness, in surely no ungenerous impatience I enrolled myself among the enemies of this unjust and doomed society; in surely no unnatural desire to keep the fires of my philanthropy alight, I bound myself by an irrevocable oath. (91)

In the search for a more just society, the man joins a secret society; this, it seems, is the way to implement visions of equality. Yet, as he explains, the group is the enemy of society; it is set apart from, and actively opposes, the world around it. And, as a

part of its action against the outer world, it assigns its agents to assassinate members of the monarchy, and even its own members when they fail to carry out such tasks. Having ‘enrolled’ in such a group and taken its oath, the man has immediately deserted all claims to democratic ideals that he once had; instead, he is now a part of an exclusive group which appears itself to be an ‘unjust [...] society’. This is a group joined by active subscription; it is not universal and open to all.

And it is the oath to which he has bound himself which ensures that every member begins afresh and in equal relations to one another, knowing *only* the oath: all of the Brothers share the same starting point and are now equal; they follow the same rules and have the same ultimate goal. The oath ensures an artificial, horizontal organising structure, as opposed to the seemingly ‘organic’ vertical strands fading into the distance of the failing consanguineous family; it is by swearing an oath that members become a part of a secret society, while the blood family looks to origins and authenticity. Members of a secret society are related through their common oath; not through their ancestors. That the would-be assassin has ‘bound [him]self by an irrevocable oath’ (91), means he is bound in lifelong servitude to his Brotherhood. Yet, more revealingly, he goes on to explain that: ‘That oath is all my history’ (91). On taking the oath, any past he had has been wiped away, ‘I had forsworn my own’ (91). Like Clara, his political family now takes priority over his own, ‘natural’ family: ‘soon my father complained of my irregular hours and turned me from his house. I was engaged in betrothal to an honest girl; from her also I had to part, for she was too shrewd to credit my inventions and too innocent to be entrusted with the truth’ (91-2). The oath erases any previous allegiances, leaving the new member free to commit only to the family-

like bonds of the secret society, which keeps members set apart from their previous experience of the world: this secret society does not even permit interaction with the blood family, upon which it is based, and, while the family can fail, this oath which binds the members of a secret society is ‘irrevocable’ (91). Members, after all, have now been ‘re-born’ into their new-found fraternal relations. The oath, therefore, generates the origins of the Brotherhood relations: with the past forgotten, this new Brotherhood is, as the man says, all the history that the members have. Rather than depending on a blurry ancestral past and family portraits, Brotherhood generates its own allegiances and thus its own reality. As far as the secret society is concerned, its members are joined through a shared origin and a resultant equality (amongst those who are members), which is perceived to be fraternal. And it is fraternal in the Derridean sense, in that it is characterised by inequality and difference, rather than the democratic relations to which it aspires.

And the oath also enables political Brotherhood groups to retain their exclusivity from the rest of the world by generating a fear of exclusion amongst its own members. The assassin explains:

An oath, so light a thing to swear, so grave a thing to break: an oath, taken in the heat of youth, repented with what sobbings of the heart, but yet in vain repented, as the years go on: an oath, that was once the very utterance of the truth of God, but that falls to be the symbol of a meaningless and empty slavery; such is the yoke that many young men joyfully assume, and under whose dead weight they live to suffer worse than death. (*The Dynamiter*, 92)

The oath swears allegiance to the cause, and to one another, but also death to those who betray the Brotherhood; in Fosco’s demise in *The Woman in White*, for example, it is his one-time ‘Brothers’ who fulfil this task.²² There is the constant risk that a

²² Fosco is killed as revenge by The Brotherhood, presumably for some form of betrayal. Hartright claims that:

Brother could be excluded from the Brotherhood, and it is this internal tension which sustains the ideals of homogeneity and equality within the group: Brotherhood not only needs the Other, excluded outer world to exist as a 'democratic' community in the first place, but it also relies on the threat of members being cast out into it.

Brothers participate in 'empty slavery' and must complete any charge they are given: the man claims that he 'begged to be released; but I knew too much, and I was still refused' (92). Political Brotherhood creates a culture of fear within the group itself, with the knowledge that a Brother could be assigned their Enemy at any given moment.²³ The assassin describes this mixture of love and hatred which becomes a part of Brotherhood relations: 'I was at the call of men whom I despised and hated, while yet I envied and admired them' (93). Even within Brotherhood there is a constant tension in the knowledge that a Brother can also be assigned an Enemy if a member transgresses the group's codes; it is this potential Otherness of its Brothers on which the secret society depends. The assassin is now inextricably bound to his Brothers, who, having sworn an oath, are both his absolute friends and enemies: Brotherhood survives on the brink of friendship and hatred, and relies on the tension which the two create to ensure the submission of its members.

I leave others to draw their own conclusions, in reference to the secret of the assassination, as I have drawn mine. When I have intimated that the foreigner with the scar was a Member of the Brotherhood (admitted in Italy, after Pesca's departure from his native country), and when I have further added that the two cuts, in the form of a T, on the left arm of the dead man, signified the Italian word, 'Traditore', and showed that justice had been done by the Brotherhood on a traitor, I have contributed all that I know towards elucidating the mystery of Count Fosco's death. (624)

The secret society exacts its own, secret, revenge on those who do not live by their rules. One of Fosco's 'Brothers' has, therefore, carried out this execution; members of a Brotherhood are both 'Brothers' and potential enemies.

²³ The secret society's culture of fear eventually 'kills' the man in the 'Narrative of the Spirited Old Lady' after he fails to carry out his duties: the diagnosis on his death is that he was 'a person of unsound intellect, who believed himself a member and the victim of some secret society. If he were to hazard an opinion he would say deceased had died of fear' (204).

The Brotherhood which is found in political groups thus becomes an extension of the kind of familial brotherhood we witnessed in *The Master of Ballantrae* and characterised by the same conflicts: by forming a political Brotherhood in the first place, the group depends on an Otherness which contradicts any idealised visions of democratic fraternal ties to which it may aspire. Despite adopting the rhetoric of brotherly relations, the political Brotherhood remains an exclusive form; yet it is this very exclusivity that the secret society requires to remain set apart. Both blood brotherhood and political Brotherhood rely on the potential implosion of brotherhood to maintain their relations *as* 'brothers'. While this leads the Durie brothers to mutual-annihilation, it also renders the secret society a non-democratic, un-equal community. Yet despite this, the relations within the secret society become stronger than those of the family: the oaths and rituals through which their fraternal allegiances exist both borrow from family relations and override them, for their members now remain loyal to the political quasi-familial group into which they have been 'reborn'. Political Brothers become entrapped within their new quasi-familial form. Stevenson's secret societies in *The Dynamiter*, like the family in *The Master of Ballantrae*, reveal a preoccupation with origins and fraternal relations, and demonstrate the self-destructive elements of brotherhood. Under these conditions, James and Henry fulfil the absolute Otherness required of them as brothers; yet while these inequalities call into question the aims of the secret society, they also enable the relations within it to thrive.

'[A] family secret'

When asked for assistance by Clara, Challoner replies: ‘Although of a very good family—through my mother, indeed, a lineal descendent of the patriot Bruce—I dare not conceal from you that my affairs are deeply, very deeply involved’ (52). To Challoner, the ‘quality’ of his ancestry signifies his own, present characteristics: while offsetting such authority with the admission that he is in debt, that he possesses distinguished consanguineous relations who are long-dead seemingly makes amends. Of course, details of the Challoner family’s authenticity are meaningless to Clara, who simply wants a task fulfilled. Yet Clara herself plays on this presumed respectability of the family to gain the trust of Challoner, who is unsuspectingly helping to transport funds within the Fenian Brotherhood: ‘I introduce you, after all, into a family secret’ (54). Clara’s ‘family secret’, in fact, is that there is no such thing as the family: as we have already seen, she has renounced her ‘natural’ family ties to assume family-like relations with her Brotherhood. And in a more abstract way, the existence of Brotherhood groups demonstrates this very idea: *The Master of Ballantrae* depicts a family gradually recognising that it has no ‘meaning’ in its current form; *The Dynamiter*, by extending idealised familial relations to political groups, portrays secret society ‘family’ formations which rely on this very fact. Both kinship forms depend upon a common origin, yet the secret Brotherhood looks to openly artificial methods to generate its relations. While the Durie family relies on a belief in its ‘natural’ ancestral origins, the worth of which quickly disintegrates before them, the secret society recognises and exploits the ‘unnatural’ role of kinship ties.

And the fraternal relations within both ‘family’ forms reveal that all brothers participate in ‘unnatural’, unfamilial relations. To exist as brothers, they depend on

their mutual origin and obligations to each other, yet also their difference from one another, to maintain their very (br)otherness. Political Brotherhoods, therefore, become problematic as they reveal their inevitable inequality in their very appropriation of the rhetoric of fraternity, as well as through their system of oaths and codes which enforce their exclusivity and the exclusion of non-members:

Brotherhood uses the characteristics of blood-brotherhood to exist at the very edge of absolute friendship and absolute enmity; yet it is this surface tension which enables the secret society to exist. And even within its ranks, this duality is extended to its members' relations to one another, which take on a similar position of potential friendship and potential enmity. Fraternity is not a natural bond, but a union reliant on oaths, ritual and a myth of (shared) origin to bind those considered to be 'brothers'. Familial relations, *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Dynamiter* suggest, are characterised by distance, separation and Otherness, rather than proximity; it is through familial strangeness that we can experience the family.

5. Sisterhood and Superfluous Mansions: untenable families in *More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter*

Here I was, the owner of the house, burglariously present in its walls; and there, in the dining-room, were two gentlemen, unknown to me, seated complacently at supper, and only saved by my promptitude from some surprising or deadly interruption. It were strange if I could not manage to extract the matter of amusement from so unusual a situation.

Robert Louis Stevenson and Fanny Stevenson, *The Dynamiter* (1885)

Female characters do not feature regularly in Stevenson's writing: like the homosocial clubland world that he frequented, Stevenson's works are largely male-dominated. Henry James commented that Stevenson's works are 'for the most part books without women' ('Robert Louis Stevenson', 1233), and this fact has prompted Stevenson critics to voice the opinion – now widespread – that his works are, therefore, awash with homosexual undertones.¹ This exclusion of the traditional domestic sphere in Stevenson's works is perceived to be unusual and unnerving; however, the lack of women in his writing does not mean that his writing must, therefore, address male sexuality. Even in his men-only groups and societies, Stevenson writes about familial relations, but with a different focus than the Victorian family as an enclosed, feminine realm: Stevenson's works acknowledge the adoption of the family form by groups which are not normally considered to be familial, as well as the importance of exclusion and outsiders to these communities. We saw this, for example, in the previous chapter, in which brotherly relations are appropriated by unrelated, political groups, with the explicit exclusion of women. Yet not all of Stevenson's works are dominated by male characters: this chapter

¹ This interpretation is evident in a large proportion of Stevenson criticism. The most prominent include: Buckton, *Cruising With Robert Louis Stevenson* (2007), Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: The erotics of male literary collaboration* (1989); Veeder, 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy' (1988); Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* (1990).

approaches these secret societies from another angle, asking what it means to be a female member of a Brotherhood and considering the involvement of women and the domestic sphere in political families. In *The Dynamiter* we find ourselves strung along and manipulated by tales narrated by the text's female characters, all of which are told to assist the Scheherazade-like narrator's political family, the Fenian Brotherhood. These Arabian Nights tales reveal the problems with family relations based on blood, and the crossovers and exchanges between family and secret society: the characters we encounter in *The Dynamiter* discover familial relations in groups outside of the traditional family form.

The Dynamiter is perhaps Stevenson's strangest story about kinship forms. Written as a collaboration between Robert Louis and Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, the text itself stems from a rather odd husband and wife team effort. In fact, this unusual partnership became all the more questionable when Fanny Stevenson claimed the text as the product of her imagination alone in her Prefatory Note to the Tusitala Edition volume in 1923:

It occurred to me to take an impotent dynamite intrigue as the thread to string my stories on. I began with the Mormon tale, and followed it with innumerable others, one for each afternoon. As time passed, my husband gradually regained his health to a degree, became again absorbed in his work, and the stories of Scheherazade were thought of no more. (xi-xii)

The Dynamiter, a compendium of stories within stories, was initially told in the form of oral tales to entertain the ailing Robert Louis Stevenson, while staying in Hyères in 1883. Yet following its publication, Fanny Stevenson claimed to have invented all of the Arabian Nights stories in the text – including its Fenian plot, which I considered in the last chapter. The only reason, she claimed, that the text came to be written down – and here, with the help of her husband – was as a quick money-

spinner: ‘On one of these occasions when money was absolutely necessary, we cast about for something that could be done quickly and without too much strain; the Scheherazade tales came to mind, and we both set to work to write out what we could remember of them’ (xii). Stevenson’s letters, perhaps, tell another story: in 1882, a year before his illness in Hyères, he wrote to Henley that he had ‘a whole volume of *Arabs* in contemplation’ (*Letters* 3: 350), only one of which – ‘The Cigar Divan’, the story which opens and concludes *The Dynamiter* – was written.² From the outset, it seems, *The Dynamiter* was the product of a joint authorship between a private married couple who could not decide exactly how collaborative their professional relationship was.³

While the previous chapter considered the role of the Fenian Brotherhood in the changing uses of fraternal relations, this chapter considers the remaining unusual and disconnected family groups and family-like groups which proliferate throughout the text, with a particular focus on their interactions with the secret society. In this text, it is the female characters who encounter or are a part of these unusual families. *The Dynamiter* provides a tour of many of the anxieties which are present throughout this thesis, and which occupied debate at the end of the nineteenth century: the role of property in the family; the (lack of) need for inherited family fortunes; the role of

² Stevenson’s list of ‘Arabs’ went as follows:

Arabs

- 1 The Young man with the Uncle. 3 parts
- 2 The Careless Parents. 3 parts
- 3 The Boarding School. 1 part
- 4 The Letter from the Dead. 1 part
- 5 The Merry Monarch and the Leicestershire Gent.
- 6 Canon’s [?] Daughter. 1 part
- 7 The Cigar Divan. (*Letters* 3: 350)

³ Elizabeth Carolyn Miller persuasively links this collaboration to the increasing influence of the New Woman: ‘That both Robert and Fanny Stevenson claimed authorship of the novel, as indicated on its title page, reinforced [the] idea of modern women undermining traditional structures of narrative authority, by violating the convention of a unified authorial voice’ (217). We will also encounter Clara as an undermining narrative presence in her role as Scheherazade.

marriage; the position of women in both the family and in society; the role of outsiders, cast-outs, exclusivity and exclusion; and the relationship between the family and the secret society. Yet *The Dynamiter* is widely seen as a text ‘about’ either a political group, the Fenian Brotherhood, or nothing at all: as a play on the endless and inexplicable events of the Arabian Nights, the text has prompted Alan Sandison to argue that: ‘Diverting as it is, [...] what *The Dynamiter* demonstrates once again is Stevenson’s conviction that the only “truth” is the effectiveness of the tale’ (*Appearance of Modernism*, 108).⁴ In addition to its fantastical stories, however, *The Dynamiter* also has a purchase on the historical position of secret societies and the role of the family. As we saw in the previous chapter, *The Dynamiter* is also a text concerning the form and function of social groups: the stories-within-stories not only portray the failed attempts of Irish rebels to blow up a statue of Shakespeare, but they are also a commentary about interactions between family groups and political secret societies. This is a text which is full of disintegrating family groups which are not familial, and non-family groups which are *like* families, the result of which is an overlap and exchange between domestic and political: *The Dynamiter* forces a reconsideration of the roles of the family and the secret society and reveals a family form which is characterised by distance and disjuncture between its members.

This overlap between families and secret societies has been identified by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall in their study of the middle class family from 1780 to 1850, *Family Fortunes* (1987). While a little earlier than Stevenson’s

⁴ Robert Kiely, similarly, claims that, in *The Dynamiter*, Stevenson ‘is almost compulsive about forcing his various narrators [...] to plead guilty to telling lies. [...] he implicitly casts aspersions on the validity of certain kinds of narrative art, especially adventure fiction, and on the integrity of writers like himself who write it’ (129).

oeuvre, Davidoff and Hall's analysis of the relationship between the Freemasons and the family remains relevant to my argument: Freemasonry, they explain, 'provided a hearth for those who did not have a home' (426); like London's clubland, which we considered in Chapter 1, it was a substitute family and home for its (male) members. And, more than this, it also extended into family life itself: 'the initiation ceremony included gifts and a party for Masons' wives together with the promise of charity for their widows and children' (426). The Masons encouraged their members to marry and have a family, while also providing substitute familial relations to the surviving family of members who had died; they appropriated their members' families and placed them under the broader scope of the Masonic familial umbrella. While, as Davidoff and Hall explain, '[w]omen's involvement with Freemasonry followed the standard practice of observer and audience' (427), rather than active participation, such behaviour reveals the crossover and exchanges occurring between domestic, family life and secret society in the nineteenth century.

And this uncertainty is evident in the secret societies in *The Dynamiter* from the very beginning of the text. The Stevensons' dedication, to the two policemen who were injured in a Fenian explosion,⁵ claims that: 'Whoever be in the right in this great and confused war of politics; whatever elements of greed, whatever traits of the bully, dishonour both parties in this inhuman contest;—your side, your part, is at least pure of doubt. Yours is the side of the child, of the breeding woman, of individual pity and public trust' (xiii-xiv).⁶ The innocence attributed to the private sphere has become mixed up in this 'war of politics'; and while the men play a

⁵ The explosion which prompted the Stevensons' Dedication took place on 14 January 1885, at Westminster Hall.

⁶ Melchiori argues that, in adding this preface, the Stevensons were 'trying very hard indeed to get into line with public opinion' by 'writing [their] way out of a very embarrassing situation' (60).

political role by policing the city, they also assume a role similar to the domestic – they are *protectors* of the nation; they safeguard its innocence in a similar way to the emblem of the mother and child. As Elizabeth Carolyn Miller explains:

the essential conflict at the heart of the modern political crime, we are led to believe, is not between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the represented and the disenfranchised, men and women, or, in the case of the Irish question, colonizers and colonized. Instead, it is between home and the streets, babies and bombs. This accords with a broader cultural tendency, evident in this novel, to depict radicalism as anathema to the bonds of the nuclear family. (220)

In other words, *The Dynamiter* portrays the Fenian problem not as a war of nationality, but as a battle between the domestic and the political. In the text, for example, we witness M'Guire, the dynamite bomber, attempting to pass his stray bomb off onto 'a little girl of about six', who is playing in the street near her mother (124). The purity of domestic life is at constant risk of dynamite explosions; it has been swept up in politics.

This is also the experience of our hapless heroes, Challoner, Somerset and Desborough, who are each, inadvertently, inducted into a secret society. While each emphasises his lengthy lineage, we first encounter them on their 'last legs' (2): Somerset, for example, explains that he is 'a man of birth, parts, and breeding; excellent company, or at least so I find myself; but by a peculiar iniquity of fate destitute alike of trade or money' (70). The gentlemen's lack of ability and dependence on inheritance, in this era of entrepreneurship, leaves them overtaken by a new class of skilled money-makers.⁷ As they head off to seek adventure and riches in the role of amateur detectives, they all encounter the story's Scheherazade figure,

⁷ This theme is also evident in the stories in *New Arabian Nights* (1878/1880), in which members of the Suicide Club are all young gentlemen, who are lacking in money, skills, occupation and talent. Robert P. Irvine documents Stevenson's gentlemen in the context of the reduced political power of the gentleman in the late-nineteenth century and the consequent confusion about what, exactly, this social position entailed in 'Romance and Social Class' (2010).

Clara Luxmore, a Fenian agent who also passes by the name of ‘Asenath Fonblanque’, amongst others.⁸ Taken in by Clara’s stories of families in distress, the gentlemen unknowingly help her to transport money and dynamite around London as they unwittingly swap their failing status as gentlemen, dependent on hereditary values and wealth, to become a part of a secret society. With all of the men unsuccessful in their task to find their own fortunes, they return back to the familiarity of their regular haunt, Prince Florizel’s cigar divan, by the end of the story.

Yet the text does not simply demonstrate the decline of the gentleman as a social form and his (unsuccessful) interaction with the political sphere in the late-nineteenth century: this chapter considers the role of the female characters and their families in the text, and how these domestic groups interact with political, quasi-family, groups. It is the female characters who dominate – and generate – the events of the text, and Sarah Cole explains that: ‘Robert Louis and Fanny Stevenson, co-authors of a strange little pastiche of a novel, *Dynamiter*, portray a series of English male dupes seduced by beautiful, snake-like revolutionary women’ (310). It is the actions and stories of these revolutionary women which reveal the politicisation of domestic, family life; as well as the unsustainable position of the family as a ‘natural’ unit. These women not only occupy a position which overlaps with both the domestic and the political world, but they also portray unusual families exchanging their form for family-like groups, such as secret societies, in their stories; it is never

⁸ While describing her failed relationship with Clara, Mrs Luxmore tells Somerset: ‘if you should anywhere encounter a young lady (I must say of remarkable attractions) answering to the name of Luxmore, Lake, or Fonblanque (for I am told she uses these indifferently, as well as many others), tell her for me, that I forgive her cruelty’ (81). I will use the names Asenath and Teresa to refer to the narrator when discussing the fictional stories told by Clara under these pseudonyms, and Clara when discussing the rest of the narrative.

entirely possible, it seems, *not* to be in a kinship group. Why and how these imbrications and transformations happen, and where this leaves the position of the family, is the subject of this chapter. As Cole asks: ‘These English-born [*sic.*] anarchist characters each raise the question also posed urgently by the historical bombings on English soil [...]: what does it mean for dynamite violence to lodge right here, at home?’ (311). In *The Dynamiter*, the answer to this question lies not only in the main dynamite narrative, but also in the sub-tales, which problematise the divisions between the public and the private, and question the possibility of a separation between family and politics.

The first section of this chapter will consider the ways in which *The Dynamiter* shows the Victorian family to be a problematic social form: it considers the unfamilial families in the text, and their role on the political stage. The female characters (most of whom are inventions of Clara) all come from families which are falling apart: illegitimacy, abandonment and even slavery abound. Yet Clara and her mother, Mrs Luxmore, prove to be more than capable of facing such problems alone and, through its depiction of female secret agents, *The Dynamiter* reveals the politicisation of the domestic sphere. Following on from this, I will consider two of the Arabian Nights tales within the narrative in more detail: first, Mrs Luxmore’s string of properties in ‘The Superfluous Mansion’, which have become redundant, having no families to inhabit them. That one of these surplus mansions, in fact, has been occupied by secret societies, further demonstrates the interaction and interdependency between the two kinship forms ‘family’ and ‘secret society’, which we considered in the previous chapter. And, finally, my focus turns to ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ – part of a growing genre of late-nineteenth century anti-

Mormon literature – and the family-like form of the Mormons. The Mormons’ kinship form is complex – not only did they encourage new members to up-sticks and abandon their current friends and family in favour of the Mormon collective form – the ‘Gathering’ – but they also promoted an alternative family form through polygamous marriages, which provoked outrage amongst social commentators and called into question the very role of marriage itself. And, moreover, the group was represented in fiction as a secret society, which endangered and consumed the family form: as the previous chapter demonstrated, this also blurs the boundaries between the family and the secret society. Through its depiction of unusual family forms, *The Dynamiter* suggests that the family is, in fact, political, and, what is more, by exploding any notion of stable kinship forms, the text ultimately demonstrates the need for dislocated family groups.

Disinherited daughters and female agents

The Luxmores’ tales of disintegrating families feature throughout *The Dynamiter*, yet they are not simply stories of families in distress. Their tall stories function as a method of assisting a political group: these seemingly domestic tales are, throughout, shown to operate on a political level as well. The family here serves a political purpose: Clara’s tales gain the trust of Challoner and Desborough to assist the Fenian Brotherhood, and Mrs Luxmore’s story inadvertently leads Somerset to rent out his new lodgings to the dynamiter, Zero. And what is more, the unusual groups we encounter, and their female heroines, pose further questions specifically about female agency and the political role of women and the domestic sphere. The families we encounter in the Luxmores’ Arabian Nights narratives are far from the ideal family

form; Clara and Mrs Luxmore recount tales of families falling apart. In ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’, for example, we encounter a family torn apart by their induction into the Mormon secret society; ‘The Superfluous Mansion’ describes Mrs Luxmore’s failed relationship with her own family; and ‘The Story of the Fair Cuban’ involves Teresa, a slave, whose family have all died. The heroines of these tales all find themselves alone in the world, leaving them conveniently able to manipulate the men who come to their assistance. Far from destitute, these narrators describe their failed family relations as a way of gaining agency themselves. The female narrators of *The Dynamiter* portray the Victorian family to be unsustainable, and the family – and women’s role in it – to have a distinct political agenda.

Tales of disintegrating families recur throughout *The Dynamiter*. Most immediately, Mrs Luxmore and Clara, our two story-spinners, have a rather unusual mother-daughter relationship. While both encounter the gentlemen of the cigar divan and feature as narrators of tall tales, they are, themselves, estranged: being related through blood, they have knowingly un-related and divested themselves of this bond. Clara, as we saw in the previous chapter, has deserted her mother in favour of the family-like relations of the Fenian Brotherhood: ‘You will hardly credit me when I inform you that she ran away from home; yet such was the case. Some whim about oppressed nationalities—Ireland, Poland, and the like—has turned her brain’ (81); she exchanges her family for a secret society. Mrs Luxmore sees this as an unnatural abandonment of her ‘real’ family and consequently rejects her daughter: ‘She deserted me, her natural protector; for years she has consorted with the most disreputable persons [...]. I refuse to see her [...]. One hundred and twenty pounds a

year I have always offered her: I offer it again' (209). Clara's familial duties now belong not to her mother, but to her secret society.

And Clara is not the only female character with strange family relations: all of the women in *The Dynamiter* are either orphaned, disinherited, or both. Mrs Luxmore herself describes her failed elopement with her suspiciously un-enamoured cousin – which, had it succeeded, would itself have been a somewhat unusual relationship – and is cast out by her own family: 'I was given the promise of a very moderate allowance, and a distinct intimation that I must never look to be received at home. I could not but resent so cruel a desertion, and I told the lawyer it was a meeting I desired as little as themselves' (72-3).⁹ In fact, Mrs Luxmore offers the same amount that she received as an allowance to her own disinherited daughter: 'It is what I had myself when I was her age' (209). These disintegrating family relations repeat themselves not only throughout the story, but over the course of generations as well – female estrangement is inherited along with an allowance to finance this 'independence'.

Clara's two fictional aliases – Asenath, and Teresa, the 'Fair Cuban' – also find themselves alone, albeit in slightly more bizarre circumstances. Asenath Fonblanque, heroine of 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', a tale which we will

⁹ In her interpretation of this dubious 'relationship' and planned elopement with her cousin, Mrs Luxmore explains:

Before I had reached the age of sixteen, this cousin, John by name, had conceived for me a sincere but silent passion; and although the poor lad was too timid to hint at the nature of his feelings, I had soon divined and begun to share them. [...] [P]erceiving that he began, in his distress, rather to avoid than seek my company, I determined to take the matter into my own hands. [...] I told him that I had divined his amiable secret; that I knew with what disfavour our union was sure to be regarded; and that, under the circumstances, I was prepared to flee with him at once. Poor John was literally paralysed with joy; such was the force of his emotions, that he could find no words in which to thank me; and that I, seeing him thus helpless, was obliged to arrange, myself, the details of our flight, and of the stolen marriage which was immediately to crown it. (71-2)

We must question her shy cousin's complicity in this 'romance' and the couple's intended marriage.

consider in greater detail below, begins her tale with the details of her father's lineage: 'My father was a native of England, son of a cadet of a great, ancient, but untitled family; and by some event, fault, or misfortune he was driven to flee from the land of his birth and to lay aside the name of his ancestors' (18). Asenath's father has no family, having to renounce his ancestral name which, similar to the role of property, forms a connection between those apparently bound by blood. This forced disinheritance and estrangement predicts the extra-familial adventure that Asenath herself is to undergo.

When Asenath's father is murdered by the Mormons, her mother chooses their neighbour, Mr Grierson's, dissolving device as a form of assisted suicide, and opts to leave her daughter to the unenticing prospect of marrying Grierson's 'son', who is in fact his younger self, 'restored to the first energy of youth' (the scientist believes, wrongly, that he can recreate the elixir of youth) (45). Grierson's experiments are attempts to enable him to occupy two positions in his family, both as himself, and as his son; such manipulation of his family prompts Asenath's revulsion at the 'detested and unnatural changeling' (47) that he would become. As I noted in the Introduction, 'changeling' refers to a person exchanged for another, thus presenting indeterminable kinship relations. No longer able to define his family status simply as 'father' to his son, Grierson's identity will be problematic: he will be both son of himself and father of himself. Abandoned by her own family, therefore, Asenath is to be absorbed into another, which is yet to even be created. Grierson tells her that: 'You are now, my child, alone in the world' (37) – her family has, quite literally, disintegrated – yet Asenath chooses this isolation over the peculiar

alternative family relations she is offered, and successfully escapes to London, where she enlists the assistance of Challoner.

Teresa's fate, meanwhile, is similarly far-fetched, and also begins her tale with an account of the genealogy of her family: 'My father drew his descent, on the one hand, from grandees of Spain, and on the other, through the maternal line, from the patriot Bruce. My mother, too, was the descendant of a line of kings; but, alas! these kings were African' (147).¹⁰ Illustrious connections and descent, however, are meaningless in *The Dynamiter*, as 'The Story of the Fair Cuban' demonstrates most clearly: Teresa's mother dies as an unmarried, and therefore unfreed, slave, making Teresa illegitimate, and a slave herself.¹¹ Teresa's family relations are proved to be entirely reliant on legal interpretation. As a result, her relationship to her father is suddenly transformed: 'You are a chattel; a marketable thing; and worth—heavens, that I should say such words!—worth money' (152).¹² Teresa is both her father's daughter and his slave; a commodity which is included in the value of his assets to his creditors: she is both related and *not* related to him.

When Teresa's father dies, therefore, she is both orphaned and not orphaned: her father is, legally, no longer her father, but simply her master. In a similar manner to Mackellar's comment to James in *The Master of Ballantrae* explaining that he was

¹⁰ Franklin W. Knight explains that: 'Most slaves in the New World originally came from the west coast of Africa, behind the region of indented coastline stretching from the mouth of the Senegal River to the territory which today (1970) roughly responds to the Portuguese colony of Angola' (48).

¹¹ Verena Martinez-Alier writes that: 'In 1864, however, a period of virtual prohibition of inter-racial marriage set in' (31). She does not state how long for. Prior to this, the decision about whether or not inter-racial couples could marry in Cuba had been the decision of the couples' parents: 'In 1803 a new decree was passed setting the age of consent at twenty-three for men and twenty-five for women. Parents or their substitutes were the arbiters on whether a proposed marriage was acceptable or not. Only in cases of dispute did the civil authorities intervene' (11). Then, in 1805, the 'Royal decree on marriages between persons of known nobility with members of the castes of negroes and mulattos' prevented any person 'of known nobility *or* purity of blood' from marrying with 'members of the castes' (12-13). These rules remained whether the people in question were slaves or free.

¹² In 1817 a treaty between England and Spain declared the slave trade in Cuba to be illegal.

once a member of the family (146), which I cited in the previous chapter, Cora, Teresa's slave, explains that 'you are no longer the poor Señor's daughter' (157). And what is more, Teresa's new master, Caulder, arrives as an immediate replacement, explaining that her 'late master was a most dishonest rogue' (158), thus not only questioning the legitimacy of her father's position as parent, but as master as well. Teresa's relationship to her father is evidently replaceable, in the eyes of the law at least: on the death of her father-master, Caulder simply assumes his place, leaving the concept of illegitimate father-daughter relationships in doubt, for if Teresa can be 'inherited' as an asset, can her familial relations be transferred also, making Caulder her father as well? As an illegitimate daughter and compulsorily disinherited from her father's wealth, Teresa has *herself* become an object to be inherited into her new father-master's possession. Consequently, intent on release, Teresa leads her new 'father' to his death with her own tall story and, like Asenath, her miraculous escape from this potential new relationship leads her to London, and to the guidance of Desborough.

Amidst its broader Fenian plotline, *The Dynamiter*, therefore, becomes a critique about the role of women in the family: women are presented as slaves, objects to marry, and, as we will see in 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', members of polygamous 'harems'. These women are better off without family at all; yet both Clara (and her fictional alter-egos) and Mrs Luxmore successfully escape their oppressive relations as a result of this isolation by transferring their loyalties to other familial groups. The mother's and daughter's triumphs are somewhat conventional: Mrs Luxmore marries into wealth, which she inherits when Mr Luxmore dies, and Clara eventually renounces her political ties to become Mrs

Desborough and to take a share in her mother's wealth at the end of the story. Yet it is in the fantastical sub-plots that we encounter female protagonists who escape failed families and the prospect of marriage or slavery to achieve independence. We leave Asenath and Teresa on the brink of freedom, with no potential husband or master in sight, busily manipulating the gentlemen with false tales of supposed distress, as fictional alter-egos of the real narrator, Clara.

Yet their new-found independence is, of course, used by Clara to help her new family unit – her secret society – which permits her to participate in the political world. In fact, it is important for us to note that Asenath and Teresa, and their families, only exist in the first place as figments of Clara's imagination to support her secret society. Miller aligns Clara with the New Woman, explaining that: 'Like Scheherazade, she deploys narration as a form of subversive power, spinning sensational yarns about Mormon Utah and colonial Cuba to bend the novel's male protagonists to her ends' (216-7). Clara consistently undermines both the gentlemen in the text and the very idea of an authoritative narrative voice; and what is more, these tales of familial distress and female escape are revealed to be important on a further political level, as a way of assisting the plans of the Fenian Brotherhood. Female involvement in families has moved from the 'angel in the house' to political agent, as the domestic sphere interacts with the political. Clara is still bound to a family form, but this time, it is an overtly political one.

How is it that women can participate in the 'fraternal' relations of the secret society which we considered in the previous chapter? Throughout the text Clara, who circulates Fenian supplies and stories, remains central to both the plot and to the existence of the secret society. Yet to do this she, as female agent of the Fenian

Brotherhood, blurs gender roles to participate in these exclusive, ‘fraternal’ relations: the role of women in these stories merges traditional ‘feminine’ domestic and the ‘masculine’ political responsibilities. Indeed, Prince Florizel chastises Clara for her lack of femininity in her dealings with the Fenians:

I tell myself continually that you are a woman; and a voice continually reminds me of the children whose lives and limbs you had endangered. [...] Possibly, madam, when you are yourself a mother, you will feel the bite of that antithesis: possibly when you kneel at night beside a cradle, a fear will fall upon you, heavier than any shame [...]. (207)¹³

Yet, unusually, women played an important role in the Fenian Brotherhood: while they did not operate as Brothers, their efforts focused on fundraising and assisting the families of Fenian prisoners: there was even a ‘Ladies’ Committee of the IRB’ (‘Irish Republican Brotherhood’ and ‘Fenian Brotherhood’ were used interchangeably).¹⁴ However, John Devoy also claimed that women were ‘keepers of important secrets, [who] travelled from point to point bearing important messages, and were the chief agents in keeping the organisation alive’: in America, he wrote, ‘there was a Fenian Sisterhood, which was the first organisation of women on a large scale for political purposes in the history of the world’. In Ireland, however, there was ‘no regular organization of Fenian women, but a large number of them worked as well as if they had been organized’ (113). And Charles William Heckethorn also documented that: ‘a Fenian Sisterhood was established, and the ladies were not inactive; for in two months from their associating they returned upwards of £200,000 sterling to the

¹³ This is also noted by Miller, who considers the passage in relation to the priority the narrative gives to the role of a female revolutionary, rather than ‘a coherent discussion of political violence’ (219).

¹⁴ Miller notes that: ‘Aside from the anti-Fenian would-be assassin Mrs. Dudley—who was compared to Charlotte Corday in the British press but was ultimately acquitted on the grounds of insanity—there were no women assassins, bombers, or dynamiters in late-Victorian Britain. In the dynamite genre, however, with its tales of assassinations and conspiratorial plots, women terrorists appeared commonly from the 1880s onward’ (190). I would suggest, however, that Clara is not as assassin or dynamiter either; she is a messenger for a terrorist group.

Fenian exchequer for the purpose of purchasing arms and other war material' (1st Ed., 2: 201).

The concept of 'Sisterhood' remains bound to the two, often conflicting, areas of religion and feminism: the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives its two relevant definitions of the term, both of which have been in use for centuries, as:¹⁵

- a) A society of sisters; *esp.* a society of women who have taken certain vows and live together under conventional rule, or who are otherwise devoted to religious life, or to charitable work as a vocation. [...].
- b) Used loosely to denote a number of women having some common aim, characteristic, or calling. Often in a bad sense. Recently also *spec.* of feminists. ("Sisterhood", *OED*)

And, as we saw in the Introduction, the term was also adopted by the medical discipline in the nineteenth century. As 'sisters', women, it seems, could either be virtuous or troublemakers – aligned with the domestic or the political – but not both. And the concept of a political, secret society Sisterhood is not widespread; having no dictionary entry of its own, it is left to their Brothers to symbolise an exclusive universalism. The traditionally domestic role of women left them as unlikely founders of politicised secret societies. Yet as Fenian Sisters, however, women were able to step out of their role in the family to participate in political societies as equals to one another; yet not quite, it seems, equals to their Brothers, who performed their group's more high profile and high risk activities.

Rose Novak explains that one Irish Fenian, Ellen O'Leary, 'travelled to Paris on missions for James Stephens, and assisted his escape from Ireland with £200 from a mortgage on her property [...]' (28). Novak also recounts the tale of a Miss Butler, described in Joseph Denieffe's *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary*

¹⁵ The first use of 'sisterhood' cited in the *OED* to mean 'society of sisters' is in 1592; the first use referring to the second definition of a 'common aim' is in 1609.

Brotherhood (1906), who ‘sheltered Stephens for the final months before his escape to France. A “fashionable Dublin dressmaker” whose clientele included the Dublin élité, her business suffered greatly afterwards’ (28). Clara herself, of course, is also described as an attractive and well-dressed heroine, which is one of her charms to her would-be rescuers, and it is this position as messenger that we see her occupy.¹⁶ Yet importantly, Clara’s gift for storytelling enables her to hoodwink all of the men whom she encounters; she remains an independent agent *and* agent of the Fenian Brotherhood. Clara takes on the traditionally masculine role of political action, yet does so as a Sister, and as such occupies an ambiguous gender role. Miller classes Clara as a ‘New Woman Criminal’:

Because of women’s contested political access, a female political criminal captured the ambiguous nature of ‘terrorist’ agency that the dynamite genre sought to represent. These authors use the female revolutionary to show that modern manifestations of ‘terrorism’ or ‘political crime’ demand broader, more collective notions of criminality *and* political representation. Because women’s agency was already viewed as an ambiguous proposition, and because women were already understood less as autonomous actors than as channels for the will of the social body, the figure of the woman terrorist dispersed guilt and victimization in the same way that political crimes seemed to do. Moreover, depicting terrorists as women, who in legal terms were extrapolitical subjects, linked the modern problem of political crime to debates about who should have political representation. (189)

Crossing the boundaries of public and private, female political agents generated questions not only about who political criminals could be, but also about the franchise, for if women could participate as political agents, they should also have a political voice.

Miller continues that: ‘the suffrage campaign was all about giving women a “legitimate” political voice, but women cannot commit political crimes if they are

¹⁶ Challoner feels bound to assist Clara when he realises that she is attractive, and thus clearly a ‘lady’: ‘He remarked with irritation that she was charming both in face and figure, elegantly dressed and gloved: lady undeniable; the picture of distress and innocence’ (12).

not recognized as political agents' (221). With their political voice unrecognised, female political agents thus remained 'officially' only domestic voices, which begs the question: where does family end and politics begin? If Clara's political action for the Fenian Brotherhood can only be classified as occurring in the domestic sphere, the secret society is then moved into the realm of the family by the very discourse which seeks to separate public and private. Clara's involvement in the Fenian Brotherhood swaps a domestic family life for a political one and, as a result, blurs politics and family, as well as stereotypical gender roles. *The Dynamiter* is not only concerned with Brotherhood, but politicised Sisterhood as well: it is a consideration about the role of women within, and outwith, both the family and secret political groups, and the overlap and exchange between the domestic and the political. While the Arabian Nights tales individually suggest this – as the proceeding sections will consider in further detail – they also lead the narrative of the text as a whole towards this conundrum. The plot of *The Dynamiter* depicts the exchange of family for political family, and the sharings and disagreements between the two.

The Superfluous Mansion

This boundary between public and private, and familial and *not*-familial is tested yet further in Mrs Luxmore's story of 'The Superfluous Mansion'. We have seen how the tales – and the main plotline – in *The Dynamiter* depict the invasion of politics into the family, with the result that family-like political relations take over: all of these failed family relations feed into a new form of familial existence by assisting the workings of the Fenian Brotherhood. And this is also very clear in Mrs Luxmore's narrative. While Mrs Luxmore is not a secret society member, her family

life is transformed by her interactions with such groups and she encounters, first hand, the strangeness of the family form: Mrs Luxmore finds herself distanced from her family and is forced to cross paths with a secret society instead. In 'The Superfluous Mansion' we witness the interrelation between family and secret society, and the impossibility of completely separating the two.

In this Arabian Nights story, told to Somerset, Mrs Luxmore lists her seven properties, all inherited from her late-husband, which she somewhat melodramatically describes as the 'burthen of my life':

I believe I have mentioned that seven mansions, besides this, formed part of Mr Luxmore's property: I have found them seven white elephants. The greed of tenants, the dishonesty of solicitors, and the incapacity that sits upon the bench, have combined together to make these houses the burthen of my life. (81)

Entangled in legal cases, Mrs Luxmore spontaneously decides to kidnap Somerset (67) and then lend him the remaining offending house for the foreseeable future (97). When we consider this excess of homes in relation to the importance of the concept of home to the Victorian family, it becomes clear that something is remiss. As we saw in the Introduction, Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink and Katherine Holden state that: '[i]n many ways the modern understanding of the family was a creation of the nineteenth century. It was those generations that so busily elevated familial relationship and cultivated the idea of Home' (101). The security of the home was equated with the innocence and stability of family life. And while Anthea Trodd explains that: 'The dominant image of the Victorian home is of a sanctuary, a firelit circle enclosed against the hostile and dangerous external world' (1), the home that we encounter in *The Dynamiter* stands empty; it is 'superfluous'. Tellingly, Mrs Luxmore herself, whose own family relations have disintegrated,

initially let out this property as she ‘lodged in a hotel, the life I have always preferred’ (82); the family home is no longer required or desired. In this story, we encounter the redundancy of the home and the family which traditionally inhabits it, and instead, the integration of the domestic form and the political secret society.

Mrs Luxmore’s tour of her houses proves to be disheartening, as none of them represent the apparent virtues of a Victorian family home:

Four were all that time tenantless and closed, like pillars of salt, commemorating the corruption of the age and the decline of private virtue. Three were occupied by persons who had wearied me by every conceivable unjust demand and legal subterfuge [...]. This was perhaps the sadder spectacle of the two [...]. (82)

All of her homes stand empty, or their tenants in doubt, and none are family homes. In fact, the Luxmores’ property portfolio now represents a business enterprise, albeit not a particularly well-managed one, rather than possessing any domestic purpose.

Mrs Luxmore states that, following the death of her husband, she ‘sought oblivion in the details of business’ (81), by which she means her newly-inherited houses; the home has become subject to market economics. Yet as Tim Dolin states: ‘The Victorians [...] held up the domestic sphere as the one space protected from the contingencies of market capitalism and the commodification of the subject’ (7). Mrs Luxmore’s properties, however, have lost their status as ‘domestic sphere’ and become embroiled in money-making, by both herself and her tenants.

And as an emblem of the security and innocence of the Victorian family, the house – and, therefore, the family form itself – has become redundant and unnecessary, at the mercy of changing tenants and squatters and other extra-domestic threats. There is even the concern in Mrs Luxmore’s mind that the superfluous mansion might be being used to house a mistress, thus generating an illicit,

illegitimate branch of the family: ‘if my house [...] was to serve in the character of a *petite maison*, I saw myself forced, however unwillingly, into a new course of litigation’ (83). Moreover, all of Mrs Luxmore’s houses are bound up in legal technicalities and cases against tenants, which are, like Dickens’s Jarndyce and Jarndyce inheritance case in *Bleak House* (1852/3), taking years to resolve (81).¹⁷ She cites the ‘greed of tenants’ and the ‘dishonesty of lawyers’ (81) as the prime reasons for her problems; property is not a place in which relations are nurtured, but it is a means by which money is made. And as a symbol of legally-recognised familial descent and inheritance – as we considered in Chapters 2 and 4, and the House of Shaws and the House of Durrisdeer – the redundant home reveals the impracticality of families which rely on property ownership as a symbol of their relations.

Yet the superfluous mansion – Mrs Luxmore’s ‘favourite house’ (95), in which she indicates she had previously dwelt (82) – does not stand uninhabited for long: both prior to, and during, Somerset’s residency, the house is recolonised by secret societies. When recounting her reasons for allowing the house to stand empty for so long, Mrs Luxmore describes her shock at catching a secret society red-handed in the middle of a failed assassination attempt against her previous tenant, Prince Florizel. Yet her surprise is more at the revealing role-reversal in which she finds herself:

Here I was, the owner of the house, burglariously present in its walls; and there, in the dining-room, were two gentlemen, unknown to me, seated complacently at supper, and only saved by my promptitude from some

¹⁷ The Jarndyce and Jarndyce case is a well-known and lengthy legal affair which has been in action for generations. It involves the inheritance of a large estate, shared between a number of claimants. By the time it is resolved, it has cost as much in legal expenses as the estate itself is worth. Mrs Luxmore’s lengthy cases have, similarly, earned her an element of fame: ‘You must have heard my name already; I am the Mrs Luxmore of the Law Reports’ (81).

surprising or deadly interruption. It were strange if I could not manage to extract the matter of amusement from so unusual a situation. (86)

Mrs Luxmore is a stranger in her own family home, forced to enter it illegally to discover what is at hand: in this scene she is both in her home and dislocated from it. The leasing of property – and thus its use for business purposes rather than as an emblem of familial security – of course encourages this dilemma. Yet the case of Mrs Luxmore is of particular interest because of those who have occupied her house. In her own family home, she finds herself unknowingly influencing the actions of a secret society, for, having locked one member in a room (85), which leads him to commit suicide under the impression that he has let down his colleague, she then saves the life of the other, also suicidal, member – and ultimately foils their plans, leaving the surviving agent to the wrath of his society (89-91). Mrs Luxmore thus inadvertently alters what is a political situation in her bid to reclaim her house. Estranged within her own family home, here, the homeowner must now enter the political domain of the secret society to reclaim it as her own home.

A similar episode occurs under Somerset's watch. During his tenancy, he takes in Zero, the dynamiter, as a lodger, who has regular visits from Clara and a suspiciously-Irish nurse: the nurse's arrival coincides with the acceleration of the 'fall of whisky in the young man's private bottle' (106) and Somerset soon finds Zero's room awash with pieces of clockwork and laboratory items (113-4). The family home has now been claimed twice-over by a family-like group – this time, the Fenian Brotherhood – revealing a shift in kinship relations: a political secret society, which claims the familial ties of 'Brotherhood', now occupies the private family home. Estranged from the traditional family home, the family's position has now been usurped instead by the strangeness of the family-like relations of the secret

society. The mansion is, of course, blown up by accident when Zero's bombs detonate successfully, bringing Somerset's occupancy to an abrupt end: 'Somerset turned in time to see the mansion rend in twain, vomit forth flames and smoke, and instantly collapse into its cellars' (196). Yet with it, the idea of a stable inherited, private family form has also been expunged.

The existence of the superfluous mansion reveals not only the problematic relationship between family and property once more, but also between family and secret society. With the secret society meeting under the mansion's roof, its quasi-familial form becomes further initiated into a family-like structure. And as well as this, the occupation of the mansion signifies the invasion of the political sphere into the private, and the accidental exchange of family for secret society. Consequently, the two begin to become inextricably intertwined: is family as 'natural' and free from political interference as we think? Like other novels concerning secret societies, such as *The Woman in White*, which depicts the intrusion of Fosco and The Brotherhood into the middle-class family home, and Conan Doyle's 'The Empty House' (1903), in which (reminiscent of 'The Superfluous Mansion') one of Moriarty's agents occupies an empty apartment across the street from Holmes' Baker Street flat in an attempt to assassinate him, *The Dynamiter* depicts the interaction between the family and the secret society, and the unclear boundaries between the two.

The Mormon Eye

This intrusion of secret societies into the family is a problem that we encounter most vividly in 'The Story of the Destroying Angel'. The Mormons remain the final

group in Stevenson's writings which this thesis will consider: their complex form as a religious group, an advocate of polygamous marriage, a secret society *and* a community made up of splintered family groups render them a suitable end-point for this study; the Mormons persistently offer alternatives to the family form. On the surface, the story is another tale of an unusual family; yet it becomes clear that this family is, in fact, controlled by a secret society. Here, we encounter a group which embodies the family tensions in *The Dynamiter*, and which demonstrates the interaction and interdependence between the private, family form and the political, national, secret society. During her flight from Salt Lake City in 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', Asenath claims that: 'To the child born on Mormon soil, as to the man who accepts the engagements of a secret order, no escape is possible' (43). A person can, she suggests, be born into secrecy and incarceration; the overlap between secret society and family is the natural condition of a Mormon 'family'. And moreover, Asenath's comment openly links secret societies to the Church of the Latter-day Saints. This, perhaps, is not surprising: Lydia Alix Fillingham points out that, as the first story in a text purportedly about the Fenian Brotherhood, 'The Story of the Destroying Angel' projects public fear of the Fenian Brotherhood onto the American-based Mormons, thus openly associating them with the threat of secret societies. Yet rather than simply presenting a distanced fear of 'irrational violence' (685), as Fillingham claims, the Mormons take on the more considered attributes of a secret society: the Latter-day Saints are depicted to function through a system of rules, codes, ritual and surveillance.¹⁸ By relating Mormon family life to the kinship

¹⁸ Maurizio Ascari also links the Mormons in 'The Story of the Destroying Angel' to domestic secret societies: 'Turn-of-the-century novels repeatedly focused on a repentant terrorist who cannot escape from the surveillance of his ex-comrades, since European secret societies were thought to bind their

offered by a secret society, *The Dynamiter* makes a statement about the condition of ‘family’ itself as both a domestic and political form.

The ideas and revelations behind the Latter-day Saints, as well as details of the peculiarities of the group, were available to the public from the very genesis of its days. The publication of *The Book of Mormon* in 1830 had given outsiders access to the eccentricities of the religion from the outset, and the newspaper press also caught on to the peculiarities of the group.¹⁹ The Mormons even had their own journal for British recruits: the *Millennial Star*, published in Manchester from 1840.²⁰ Mormon literature throughout the nineteenth century openly considered and justified their voluntary segregation from the outside world: the question, ‘Why do the Saints Gather?’ proliferates in circulations such as *Journal of Discourses* and *Millennial Star*.²¹ Gathering was a way of collecting Mormon kin into the same location to combat persecution and to protect the new religion, which emphasised separation from the outer American society, and also from the family itself (Widmer, 58). In his study of the organisation of secret societies, Georg Simmel argued that: ‘A new insight, a young religion [...] is often still weak and needs protection, and for this reason conceals itself’ (346-7). The Mormons, when considered from this perspective, gathered for security. Gathering here becomes akin to ‘concealment’

adepts by an oath of allegiance that could never be undone. What happened in Utah for religious reasons, at least according to anti-Mormon propaganda, could happen in London for political ones’ (54).

¹⁹ For example, in 1871 ‘The Mormon Prosecutions’ received lengthy coverage in *The Times* for the first sentencing of a Mormon polygamist, while the annual ‘Mormon Conference in Glasgow’ was described in 1872; numbers, it reported, were momentarily depleted due to ‘the emigration of 200 “saints” in the course of the year’ (7). Further emigrants boarded a ship in Liverpool in the same year ‘to join their sect on the other side of the Atlantic’ (‘Mormon Emigrants’, 12).

²⁰ M. Hamlin Cannon states that: ‘About half the European Mormon emigrants (43,356) [in the nineteenth century] were from the British Isles’ (893).

²¹ See, for example, Bench, ‘Why do the Latter-day Saints Gather?’ (1884); Irvine, ‘Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt’ (1881); ‘Discourse by President George Q. Cannon’, (1882); and ‘Discourse by President John Taylor’ (1883).

and secrecy: by protecting themselves in such a way the Mormons, as *The Dynamiter* suggests, enter the realm of secret societies, tacitly protecting themselves by fighting against the State.

Yet the official doctrinal explanation for Gathering was different. One article in 1882 clarifies:

Cannot people serve God and live their religion amongst their friends in their own land, as well as to leave all and gather with the Latter-day Saints in America? The answer to this question is simply—No! The purposes of the Almighty could not be accomplished in any other way than by a universal gathering of His people! Neither could the prophecies of the ancient Prophets be fulfilled except the gathering took place! (Cooper, ‘The Gathering’, 116)

The doctrinal reason behind ‘Gathering’ was ‘to await the coming of the Messiah to establish his reign on the earth’ (Widmer, 57); in order to be prepared for this event, Mormons must congregate in the same location – presumably, to make them more easily identifiable for salvation.²² Yet the very act of Gathering had the potential to break up established, ‘natural’ familial relations in favour of religious kinship: John Cooper went on to explain that the ‘Saviour said, “He who will not leave father, mother, wife and children, *houses and lands*, for my sake and the Gospel, is not worthy of me”’ (117). The collectivity of Mormonism was based around an idea of leaving family and friends, and uprooting to be with other Mormons.²³

²² One lesson explained that: ‘Many suppose that he will come and find the Saints scattered all over the world, not gathered into any special country; but it is evident that those who have taken this view of the subject don’t understand the Scripture writings’ (Irvine, ‘Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt’, 273).

²³ One of the criticisms of Mormonism – as well as one of its overriding strengths – was deemed to be its ‘clannishness’. Terry L. Givens explains that:

their clannishness was disturbing for several reasons. By adhering so zealously to the principle of the gathering, the Mormons were complicit with their detractors in emphasizing the apartness of Mormon culture that would later flower into [...] quasi ethnicity [...]. And in addition to the offensiveness of a vocabulary of ‘chosenness’ in the midst of an emphatically egalitarian culture, there were the Mormons’ economic practices that emphasized self-sufficiency and independence from the larger economic order [...]; in all respects they reaffirmed their status as a people set apart. (54)

The close-knit community of the Mormons amidst a country which prided itself on equality inevitably drew condemnation from non-members.

In 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', Asenath's mother, a 'human insect' and Mormon convert, has been recruited to join a Mormon caravan from the 'slums' (21) of Europe, with no sign of her family; Asenath's father, as we have seen, fled his family, and met her mother while exploring with frontiersmen (18).²⁴ The pair are not permitted to marry unless he agrees to renounce the past and join the Mormon gathering: he 'accepted the Mormon doctrine, and received the promise of my mother's hand on the arrival of the party at Salt Lake' (23), explains Asenath; the Fonblanques only exist as a family in the first place as a result of their acceptance of Mormonism. Opening in pre-railroad Utah and in the early stages of Salt Lake City, her story charts the very beginnings of the Mormon Gathering in the American wilderness: 'Great Salt Lake City' was founded by the Mormons in 1847; Asenath's father, however, travels 'into the still unknown regions of the West' (18) and Asenath 'had heard of the railway, though I had not seen it' (25). The group are so isolated from the rest of mankind that they are in the middle of the desert, amidst the 'great silence that reigned' (19), and when settled in Salt Lake City the surrounding topography is described as like a 'fort' (24); the environment in which the Gathering takes place physically protects the group from outside threats.

Mormon literature acknowledged the difficulties of such isolation, and an article in the *Millennial Star* in 1883 accepted that:

The principle of the gathering is one that presents a stumbling-block to many who, having comfortable homes, pleasant surroundings and the associations of kindred and friends, are loath to leave scenes rendered sacred by birth and companionship, and unite themselves with a people who teach as a tenet of their faith a requirement naturally so disagreeable. ('The Gathering', 696)

²⁴ It is likely that Stevenson came into contact with Mormons on his own 'emigrant' journey in America: in 'Across the Plains' (1879) he wrote of his fellow passengers that: 'Some of them were on nettles till they learned your name was Dickson and you a journeyman baker; but beyond that, whether you were Catholic or Mormon, dull or clever, fierce or friendly, was all one to them' (56).

And a further article in 1884 stated: ‘The question becomes one of great importance, involving as it does, sacrifice in many instances, causing a separation from friends and kindred and the breaking of strong ties of affection, endeared by nature and hard to sever’ (Bench, 522). The point of these articles was to persuade new recruits to join the Gathering, yet revealingly the articles also acknowledged the ‘unnatural’ family separation which Mormonism caused: family ties, they claimed, are ‘endeared by nature’ and separation is ‘naturally so disagreeable’. The concept of the ‘universal gathering of His people’ (116) which Cooper cites was, therefore, problematic, as ‘universality’ could only be applied to Mormon members: the very act of Gathering was, as the Latter-day Saints acknowledged, a threat to family life. Like members of a secret society, Mormon members subscribed to their interpretation of the ‘universal’ qualities of mankind by joining a group which was distinct and disconnected from the rest of the world. Yet it was only through Gathering, Mormonism claimed, that God could ‘[restore] the keys and powers by which the family organization may be made perfect for all time’ (‘The Gathering’, 699). The Mormons thus presented themselves as an alternative – and privileged – social form, through which, paradoxically, the family could be *saved*. The kinship which Mormonism offered was thus a substitute for – and an apparent solution to – familial existence.

While, on the one hand, the Mormons presented themselves as redeemers of the domestic form, on the other, popular literature of the period related them to licentiousness, threats to the family from polygamy, political problems and secret societies. Current perceptions of the Mormons consider the denomination to fulfil

the ‘all-American’ attributes of community-spirit and family-focus,²⁵ yet only a century ago, the term ‘Mormons’ evoked very different notions: events such as the Mountain Meadows Massacre of ‘gentile’ emigrants in 1857 and the revelation that polygamy would secure Mormon members an easier ascent to heaven secured their image as a barbaric and unnatural society.²⁶ Anti-Mormon literature was a female-dominated genre, which depicted the domestic realm of the family under threat from Mormon licentiousness; women were prominent both as helpless and innocent protagonists in fictional pieces and as authors of ‘factual’, exposé accounts. As Terry L. Givens puts it:

By virtue of their exclusivist, tightly knit communities, Mormons invited [...] treatment as destroyers of feminine freedom and virtue. Once polygamy was publicized, the literary possibilities were too good to miss. Novel writing could suddenly be salacious, lucrative, pious, chivalrous, and patriotic all at

²⁵ David Van Biema’s article explains that:

It would be tempting to assign the Mormons’ success in business to some aspect of their theology. [...] But it seems more likely that both Mormonism’s attractiveness to converts and its fiscal triumphs owe more to [...] ‘sociability,’ an intensity of common purpose (and, some would add, adherence to authority) uncommon in the non-Mormon business or religious worlds. There is no other major American denomination that officially assigns two congregation members in good standing, as Mormonism does, to visit every household in their flock monthly. Perhaps in consequence, no other denomination can so consistently parade the social virtues most Americans have come around to saying they admire. [...] [I]t is hard to argue with Mormon uniformity when a group takes care of its own so well. The church teaches that in hard times, a person’s first duty is to solve his or her own problems and then ask for help from the extended family. (56-7)

Perceptions of Mormonism, he argues, have, in some aspects, taken an about-turn – now, he claims, Mormons represent the American values of caring for the family and community. Yet interestingly, his article also suggests that the Mormons bypass the family for the ‘extended family’ of the Mormon community.

²⁶ The Mountain Meadows Massacre took place in September, 1857. Around one hundred and twenty emigrants travelling in southern Utah were killed by Mormons and Native Americans acting under Mormon instruction. After an initial attack, it was claimed that John D. Lee convinced the emigrants to surrender, only for them to be killed immediately. Jack Tracy explains that the ‘popular press eagerly seized upon the issue and throughout the 1880s produced a steady stream of sensationalized “inside stories” about Utah life. But where earlier the Mormons had been called clannish and unpatriotic, licentious at worst, now they were called murderers as well’ (41). Lee stood trial in 1877 and his confession was published in *The Times* after his execution. It explains the secrecy of all who participated: ‘We were all sworn to secrecy before and after the massacre [...]. It was a crime punishable by death to disobey [...] orders’ (‘The Mountain Meadows Massacre’, 8). This ability of the Latter-day Saints to act as secret law-makers generated international uproar and Tracy argues that this confession did much to heighten the animosity for the religion.

once. Throughout a variety of genres, the theme of Mormon abduction plays itself out with virtually perfect consistency. (143)

‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ itself is a typical example of this: it is, of course, widely accepted to have been written by Fanny Stevenson,²⁷ and as the story opens Asenath’s mother (then a girl) is left to die by the Mormon elder, Grierson, only to be saved by Asenath’s father. The story, as we have seen, goes on to feature the usual tale of the female protagonist fearing for herself and her family in the clutches of the Mormons. The threat which Mormonism posed was overwhelmingly attributed as a danger to the domestic sphere: women were apparently at serious risk of abduction in order to fulfil the perverse and polygamous desires of Mormon elders. ‘True-life’ accounts also suggested that the Latter-day Saints posed a threat to the domestic sphere across the world, ripping apart families and specifically targeting women.²⁸

And one of the most unmistakable ways in which the Mormons questioned the authority of both family and state was through the doctrine of polygamy. Tony Tanner writes in *Adultery in the Novel* (1979) that: ‘The most important mediation procedure that attempts to harmonize the natural, the familial, the social, and even the transcendental is, of course, marriage’ (16). He explains that marriage facilitated the view that family – and the ideals upon which nineteenth century society relied, such as the multi-faceted roles of the faithful wife/daughter/mother and

²⁷ Sandison judges that: ‘Apart from “The Destroying Angel” and “The Story of the Fair Cuban,” which are clearly Fanny’s work in that they operate in a patently different “key,” Stevenson sustains a narrative discourse of brilliant artificiality’ (‘A World Made for Liars’, 149).

²⁸ In 1882 Emily M. Austin published a narrative of her life after voluntary conversion to Mormonism continues this theme of kidnap. Austin suggested that she was duped into leaving her family: ‘many a night I spent in weeping for thus leaving my father’s house. And I will truthfully say I was not the only one who had thus been led away by those false teachers, for many a house has been deserted and many a family broken up on this account, not only in America, but also in England, Norway, Scotland, Germany, and in Palestine’ (59).

husband/son/father – was a natural form. The breakdown of marriage, which connects families and creates societal structures, ‘portends the possible breakdown of all the mediations on which society itself depends’ (17). Polygamy thus threatened the bases of society as a whole. Fillingham, indeed, claims that: ‘While the presence of a woman anchors matters firmly in the private, the plurality of polygamy renders the family an unstable social grouping that threatens to devour young girls’ (675). But what is more, having been outlawed in America in 1882, the policy resulted in a dual defiance of national law and conventions, as well as the traditionally accepted, monogamous family form.²⁹ By challenging the family, and replacing it with a family-like form, this seemingly domestic problem was also a challenge to America, and to nineteenth century social values, as a whole.

Polygamy is believed to have been secretly practised within the church since 1840, but it was only officially announced by Brigham Young in 1852 – and later banned by the church in 1890 (Morin and Guelke, 438). The official reason for the Latter-day Saints to turn to such a system was, once more, to *protect* the family form:

Abraham’s wife Sarah, unable to bear children, encouraged him to marry their servant Hagar in order to carry on the family line. Sarah then miraculously gave birth to Isaac in her later years. In search for a religious system that would enhance family organization and produce an orderly social structure, Smith saw polygyny as a lifestyle that righteous men [...] could adopt [...].’ (Altman and Ginat, 24)

Like its justification for the Gathering, Mormonism thus claimed to be a defender of the family by changing its structure to another, alternative form of familial kinship.

Polygamy was presented as both a useful social form and a method of easing the

²⁹ ‘The Edmunds Act of 1882 and the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1890, disfranchised all polygamists, took control of Utah’s public school system, abolished the Mormon territorial militia, abolished female suffrage, and disincorporated the Mormon Church, escheating its properties, except for meeting houses and temples, to the United States. In 1887, voters were required to swear to uphold the Edmunds Act of 1882’ (Handley, 101). Disagreements concerning polygamy led to ‘war’ between the Latter-day Saints and America itself.

ascension to heaven: the more wives a man had, the more likely he – and they – would one day enjoy the fruits of paradise.

The unforgiving description of polygamous wives in ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ is fairly typical of popular literature about Mormons:³⁰ Asenath describes the ‘ill-favoured and mentally stunted women of [the elders’] harems’ (24). And Grierson explains that he has ‘left the slatterns whom they call my wives to scratch and quarrel among themselves; of me, they have had nothing but my purse’ (33). Yet Asenath stands out amongst her fellow anti-Mormon heroines in her description of her childhood amidst polygamous families. ‘I dwelt, indeed, under the Mormon system’, she explains, ‘with perfect innocence and faith. Some of our friends had many wives; but such was the custom; and why should it surprise me more than marriage itself?’ (23). Having been born into Mormon kinship, polygamy seems entirely normal to Asenath: what is ‘natural’ and what is not, therefore, depends entirely on exposure. And Asenath goes further to suggest that marriage itself is an ‘unnatural’ union; polygamy, she implies, is merely an extension of an already present problem. Karen M. Morin and Jeanne Kay Guelke’s article about female travellers’ fascination with Mormon wives explains that: ‘by focusing on another society’s “barbaric” treatment of women, travelers falsely presented themselves as free from patriarchal oppression. Monogamy was unexamined and

³⁰ Mark Twain’s satirical *Roughing It* (1872) suggests that Mormon husbands who took on more than one of such women were nothing but virtuous. Polygamy was also perceived to be physically bad for the wives in question: Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith’s ‘true-life’ account of fifteen years among the Mormons described how she became ill after her husband took a second wife (Green, 89-99); in another exposé, Fanny Stenhouse described first-wives who became decrepit and depressed following their husband’s entrance into polygamy (*Tyranny*, 268), and the suicide attempt of one friend after becoming unhappy as a polygamous wife (347-56). Fanny Stenhouse’s husband, T. B. H. Stenhouse, also took a second wife, and Fanny’s narrative details her despair at his betrayal (273-305). In *Three Visits to America* (1884), published in Edinburgh, Emily Faithfull described polygamy as a ‘crime against nature’ (197).

simply assumed to be a trouble-free alternative to plural marriage' (499). Fanny Stevenson shakes off the tunnel-vision which travel-writers displayed and, albeit briefly, considers polygamy as an additional problem stemming from the concept of monogamous marriage itself. While many commentators criticised polygamy as a threat to 'natural' domestic life, 'The Story of the Destroying Angel' departs from this focus on the purity of the family to portray Asenath recognising the problems in *all* forms of marriage.

The Mormons' separation from, and conflict with, 'outer' society incurred by Gathering and polygamy contributed to their depiction in the popular press as a separate, secret society, which further challenged both family and state.³¹ Fanny Stenhouse, a one-time Mormon convert and writer of Mormon exposés, *A Lady's Life Among the Mormons* (1873) and *The Tyranny of Mormonism* (1888), described the rituals of the Endowment House, where marriages were performed and non-Mormon families were validated. Without this ceremony, she claimed:

our marriage was not valid, and our children were not legitimate. Only those children of ours who were born *after* the ceremony in the Endowment House would be legitimate; the others were outcasts from the 'Kingdom' unless we adopted them *after* our initiation, and thus made them heirs. In any case, poor children, they could never be considered the *real* heirs; they could only be 'heirs by adoption.' (*Tyranny*, 192)

Membership of the Latter-day Saints disrupted the 'natural' consanguineous family line: any children born prior to Mormon membership were, essentially, not legitimate. The Latter-day Saints could tell members that their family was not, in fact, their 'family' after all. Fanny Stenhouse also described the stages of the

³¹ Faithfull wrote of the 'secret oaths of an organisation so powerful that all the efforts of the United States congress have hitherto failed to stamp out' (190). The Mormon murder in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) is mistaken for the work of secret societies: Jefferson Hope scrawls 'RACHE' on the wall of the crime-scene as a diversion, leading *The Times* to allude 'airily' to groups such as the Vehmgericht and the Carbonari (48).

Endowment House initiation, which included the performance of a myth of origin, cleansing rituals of ‘washing’ and ‘anointing’ (194), and secret ‘pass-words and grips’ (197), which signify a rebirth into the new system. There, she claimed, they ‘took the solemn oath of obedience and secrecy’ (197). The entire service is something of a conundrum – what need would a religious order have for ‘grips’, ‘pass-words’ and oaths of secrecy? And why would families choose to join it? Having ritualistically erased the previous family form and replaced it with its new Mormon interpretation, the family has a new foundation for its relationships. Family kinship has, in these texts, been displaced in favour of the explicitly artificial family-*like* kinship of a Mormon secret society which aims to both attain happiness in the afterlife and wreak revenge on America itself.

Indeed, as a result of the combination of their exclusive, and excluding, social form and their open resistance to American law – both in their privileging of polygamy and their use of their own forms of justice – the Mormons not only challenged the family with their use of oaths and secrecy, but they appeared to take the form of a political secret society, at war with the country in which it gathered. In 1845 the Mormons’ oath was changed to include a pledge of vengeance for Smith’s death at the hands of ‘gentiles’ one year earlier, which included swearing to ‘avenge the blood of the Prophets on this nation’, a pledge which was removed in 1927 (Krakauer, 198-9). The Mormons thus sought revenge on America as a whole through a group-pledge; they set themselves up in direct opposition to the country in which they resided. While Fillingham notes the perceived similarities between the Carbonari, who were initially ‘mobilized in anger’, and the Mormons in the nineteenth century, her argument that they were ‘without any clearly defined political

program' (679) is, therefore, problematic. The Mormons joined the group of nineteenth century secret societies with a political motive: for America to function as a universal *Mormon* Brotherhood.³² Indeed, in his study *Rocky Mountain Saints* (1873), T. B. H. Stenhouse detailed 'The Mormon War' (354-70), and the 'national independence' which Brigham Young had declared (355 and 358-9).³³ Young, he claimed, had announced on 24 July, 1857, that 'he himself should be President of the United States, or would dictate who should be' (351). The Mormons had 'Gathered' in direct opposition to the laws of the country in which they resided.

What, then, were the implications of the kinship offered by the Mormon secret society for the family itself? Morin and Guelke explain that: 'Domesticity, women's social roles, the family, manners, fashions, religious piety, the home, and morals were topics in which the proper Victorian woman writer could claim superior insights, occasionally with a disingenuous inattention to the "masculine" expansionist project in which she participated' (442). It was natural for female writers to take to the Mormons as interesting studies as a consequence of the multiple household topics which they could consider; furthermore, anti-Mormon literature appears to have been confined to threats to women, family life and the domestic sphere. It would, therefore, initially seem unusual that the Mormons are often

³² Indeed, the practice of baptising non-Mormon ancestors into the Church of the Latter-day Saints has claimed a great number of (deceased) people for their cause. An article in *Millennial Star* in 1883 explained that God 'has opened the door by which those who died without a knowledge of the truth may be redeemed through the Gospel' ('The Gathering, 699). This idea that the Mormons could colonise the dead demonstrates a strange control over the 'vertical' family line. As Van Biema explained in 1997, 'to assure non-Mormon ancestors of an opportunity for salvation, current Mormons may be immersed on their behalf. The importance of baptizing one's progenitors has led the Mormons to amass the fullest genealogical record in the world, the microfilmed equivalent of 7 million books of 300 pages apiece' (55-6). The Mormons extended their religion not just to the living, but also to the dead, resulting in the online database which is now widely used for family trees and genealogical searches.

³³ The phrase 'Mormon war' is found in the *OED*, for which the first given citation is dated at 1833; the term denotes 'any of several armed conflicts involving Mormon forces; *spec.* that between Utah Mormons and the U.S. army sent to establish federal rule in 1857-8'.

depicted in fictional and ‘first-hand’ accounts in terms of secret societies – decidedly political affairs in the nineteenth century. Yet this in fact further demonstrates the tensions about the proximity and overlap between the family and the secret society – and the private and the political – at this time: the female writers did indeed consider the quotidian, domestic Mormon sphere, but this involved a focus on the secretive aspects of the order, and how this influenced and affected family life: the two became crucially intertwined. By relating Mormon family life to the kinship offered by a secret society, these anti-Mormon texts made a statement about the condition of ‘family’ itself as both a domestic and political form, and the confused position in which it found itself.

We can see this in ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’, which depicts the Mormon system as a secret society which consumes and transforms the domestic form: Asenath’s rapidly disintegrating family is a part of this family-like group. As her family falls apart, the system under which it lives is revealed to be secretive and dangerous. Through their codes and surveillance, the Mormons in ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ fall in line with other popular depictions of the Mormons in the nineteenth century as a secret society. Yet this story also reveals the coterie within the Mormon secret society, which exacts retribution and revenge: the Danite Band, also known as the Destroying Angels.³⁴ It is this group, we are led to believe, which controls the Mormon order, with the additional assistance of tropes such as the ever-watchful ‘Mormon Eye’. The families living under this system function as members

³⁴ The Danite Band, also known as the Destroying Angels, was perceived to be a secret society *within* the Mormon secret society. ‘It is said to be composed of reliable men who are ever ready to “take off” inimical persons, and plunder or destroy the property of the offenders. [...] [C]ompanies of tens and fifties [...] gave “signs” and “grips” by which they should know each other by day or by night, binding themselves by the most sacred oaths to preserve in secrecy their works of darkness’ (T. B. H. Stenhouse, 91).

of a secret society and become interdependent: they require each other for protection from the Eye and, at the same time, uphold its authority. While the idea of the Victorian family presupposes a concentric structure, in which we move from the outer, public realm to the increasingly domestic, private – even secret – female space of the home and the family, the Mormons in the Stevenson's short story form a circularity of gazes. The Fonblanques have exchanged their current domestic family form for another, quasi-familial, political form.

By failing to accept the Mormons' interpretation of family – the doctrine of polygamy – and instead preserving their monogamous marriage, they awaken the Mormon Eye of Utah. Such disobedience (and dearth of wives), of course, is not tolerated: in joining the Mormons it is understood that the Fonblanques will surrender their family form to the group as well. By failing to do this fully, the terrors of the Danite Band are unleashed upon them, as are its ulterior motives: the Mormons in 'The Story of the Destroying Angel' are not a god-fearing religious group, but a rigorously policed secret society, which gives the appearance that the Destroying Angels wield an unearthly power. When Asenath's father is ostracised by the Mormon community, he is surprised by the knowledge of his superiors: 'I have received to-day a list of all that I possess; of all, I say,' he exclaims, 'of what I have lent privately to men whose lips are sealed with terror; of what I have buried with my own hand on the bare mountain, when there was not a bird in heaven. Does the air, then, carry secrets? Are the hills of glass? Do the stones we tread upon preserve the footprint to betray us?' (26-7). That the Mormons know of the Fonblanques' most private actions reveals the society to have an omniscient control over its members, due to the fear and secrecy the Mormons' oaths and initiation have

generated. The knowledge of the Mormon elders is attributed to natural phenomena; it is the Mormons, not the traditional family form, who are related to the organic.

The Mormon emblem of the 'Open Eye' refers to this, supposedly 'natural', method of surveillance over the group's members; yet in fact, each Mormon is constantly surveying other Mormons. The Fonblanques encounter this reminder during their first, thwarted, attempt to flee: 'Judge of our dismay when, turning suddenly an angle of the cliffs, we found a bright bonfire blazing by itself under an impending rock; and on the face of the rock, drawn very rudely with charred wood, the great Open Eye which is the emblem of the Mormon faith' (29). The presence of the emblem alone is enough to make them turn back, for it signifies the potential surveillance which the family could be under and the threat which looms in the form of the Danite Band; it is this emblem which becomes the main controlling and self-disciplining device of the secret society. Related only through their mutual loyalty to the Open Eye, the Mormon members thus perpetuate their own incarceration. The Open Eye moves us to a further form of Bentham's Panopticon, producing not a single all-seeing gaze, but a circulation of many individual acts of observation and secrecy.³⁵ While it appears to be a godly, organic presence carried in the air or on the land, the Open Eye is, rather, representative of the structure of the group and the interaction between members of the society: there is no single, omnipresent, spying being, except the group-form of the society. With a mysterious type of control lingering over them, members are caught in a cycle of fear and informing on their neighbours, as we see with Grierson's betrayal of the Fonblanques. It is the

³⁵ Foucault's interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison explains how the central observation station 'induce[s] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (*Discipline and Punish*, 201), due to the prisoner's inability to know if he is being watched.

members themselves who ultimately generate the secret society's structure. Yet by remaining unknown, and appearing to be all-knowing, the authority to which they have submitted can only be justified by members as a Godly presence: the 'Open Eye'. It is the Mormon families themselves who are wreaking havoc on the 'traditional' family form by joining and enforcing a quasi-political secret group.

The Eye, of course, can see Asenath as she flees to England (Mormonism was, after all, a multi-national faith at this time), and when Grierson joins her, 'he would gloat over the details of that great organisation, which he feared while yet he wielded it; and would remind me that, even in the humming labyrinth of London, we were still visible to that unsleeping Eye in Utah' (48). Grierson recognises that he exercises the power of the religion by his very submission to it, and now he cannot remove himself from the omniscient secret society it has become. Related to one another through their membership of the 'organisation' and the surveillance it subjects them to, the members of the Mormon secret society are now reliant on one another for their very existence; they now function as individual units within the 'organisation' which defines them. All of the members are watching and informing on one another, while they are also bound to each other through the same oath; despite their culture of surveillance, members of a secret society need one another for their existence *as* members; it is a self-generating, self-perpetuating agreement, which Grierson both participates in and fears. And this, of course, mimics the reliance of members of a family upon one another for *their* identities: 'wife', 'husband', 'son', 'daughter', and so on, all define the individual through their relation *to someone else*; they are related through a system of deferral. The secret society merely makes this void at the heart of familial identity more apparent, and

colonises the family form for itself. Members of the Mormons have left behind family to induct themselves into another familial form: ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ displays the interaction and overlap between family and secret society.

Not-familial, family-like families

Where, then, does the secret society end and the family begin? The distinction made at the very beginning of the Introduction to this thesis, between families which were not familial, but dysfunctional or falling apart, and non-family groups which were *like* families in Stevenson’s texts, is not as clear-cut as it first had seemed. In *The Dynamiter*, we have encountered the interrelation between family and secret society, and the need for separation and distance within the family form. While the previous chapter, for example, examined the disintegrating Durie family, and the rising political Brotherhood relations, in *The Dynamiter* we have considered unusual families which actively take an oath and undergo an initiation process to become a part of a secret society – a quasi-familial group. While Mrs Luxmore accidentally enters the world of secret societies at the same time as entering her own home, the Mormon secret society takes us a step further as it only exists in the first place as the result of family groups knowingly being inducted into the group.

The Fonblanques, indeed, choose to become members of the Latter-day Saints: Asenath’s mother is already a convert and her father agrees to become a Mormon to be able to marry her. They submit to an alternative familial group to, problematically, protect their own family. And the ‘factual’ anti-Mormon literature which surrounds ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ at this time also recounts families, and fragments of families, choosing to be initiated into the Mormons: the

Latter-day Saints offered salvation to the family form, through its complete submission to Mormon kinship. The Mormon emphasis on ‘Gathering’ made it clear that potential recruits should leave their families if necessary in order to join its own quasi-familial form, which involved rituals and a new marital family structure of polygamy, which created vast networks of inter-relations. And these families and fractured-families not only join a religious group, but a political one as well – as we have seen, the Mormons challenged American law and societal conventions with its policy of polygamy and its oath. In *The Dynamiter*, we encounter the family which is not familial taking on the role of the not-family which is *like* a family: the related chooses to ‘become’ an unrelated, politicised group which behaves like a family group.

It is through this integration that we arrive at a form of kinship which recognises the need for Otherness within the family form. We have encountered the importance of the unrelated and the outsider to kinship groups throughout this thesis, and the Mormon group and the Fenian Brotherhood in *The Dynamiter* further support this need for social dislocation. In *The Dynamiter* families must step outside of the family to become familial. The disintegrating family needs to accept a different form of relations in order to become like a family: they must ‘become’ *not* related to one another to behave as if they *were* related. Thus, the Fonblanques become a family only through their initiation into the Mormons; Clara flees her unsatisfactory mother-daughter relations to participate in a secret Brotherhood which inhabits her family home; the superfluous mansion, once standing empty, becomes a home once more – to a secret society. Each situation does not quite bring the family full-circle: these groups are more family-like than the family form itself.

And even more problematically, all only come to experience this 'domesticity' through their initiation into the political: Asenath's family depend on the politically-motivated Mormons (unsuccessfully) to retain their family form; it is by joining a political group that Clara becomes a Fenian Brother/Sister in her mother's house; the superfluous mansion becomes a home once more when occupied by a political group. Women, meanwhile, consistently flout their traditional domestic role and engage in the political; blood families and their political role become confused: in *The Dynamiter* we encounter unusual family groups which show all the signs of being a secret society, through initiation, oaths and commitments. And what is more, Teresa's and Asenath's problematic families only 'exist' in the first place as figments of Clara's imagination to assist her efforts with her alternative family, the Fenian Brotherhood. The family, it seems, is not a domestic form, but a political one. *The Dynamiter* reveals both the related and the unrelated, and the domestic and the political, to be entirely interdependent and inextricable: amidst the artifice of the Arabian Nights we also discover that there is nothing 'natural' about family.

CONCLUSION: FOREIGNERS AT HOME

‘[W]ithout kith or kin’

‘Mary, girl,’ said I, ‘this is the place I had learned to call my home, and I do not know it.’

Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Merry Men’ (1882)

‘The Merry Men’ (1882) is a mysterious tale of a community pushed to its extremities, which depicts a Scottish isle and its inhabitants who are profiting from shipwrecks – and shipwrecking. Marooned on the tidal island of Aros with his superstitious, and increasingly insane, Uncle Gordon and his daughter, Mary, Charles Darnaway explains that:

I was far from being a native of these parts, springing, as I did, from an unmixed lowland stock. But an uncle of mine, Gordon Darnaway, after a poor, rough youth, and some years at sea, had married a young wife in the islands; Mary Maclean she was called, the last of her family; and when she died in giving birth to a daughter, Aros, the sea-girt farm, had remained in his possession. [...] Meantime our family was dying out in the lowlands; there is little luck for any of that race; and perhaps my father was the luckiest of all, for not only was he one of the last to die, but he left a son to his name and a little money to support it. I was a student of Edinburgh University, living well enough at my own charges, but without kith or kin; when some news of me found its way to Uncle Gordon on the Ross of Grisapol; and he, as he was a man who held blood thicker than water, wrote to me the day he heard of my existence, and taught me to count Aros as my home. (3-4)

‘The Merry Men’ is characterised by families which are ‘dying out’; as we saw in *Kidnapped*, it is not only the Highland family which is encountering problems, for Charles explains that his Lowland branch is also almost at an end. Charles was, he claims, ‘without kith or kin’, until his Uncle Gordon contacted him. But how could Charles perceive himself to be without kin while also in the knowledge that members of his own family were still alive, in the north of Scotland? What does it mean to be ‘without kith or kin’ while also having a family? These are the questions, found

across Stevenson's oeuvre, which this thesis has considered: what are the implications of being a member of a not-family? Charles does not, initially, consider himself to be a member of his own family; 'The Merry Men' demonstrates that the Lowland-Highland divide is not only geographical, but social – the kinship found in the south is not comparable to that of the north, as we also saw in the case of *Kidnapped*. And, evidently, family and kinship are matters of perception rather than innate relation.

Yet even after Charles comes to 'count Aros as his home', there remains this disjuncture. Primarily, Charles is physically distanced from the remote island which his family inhabits, and can only really become a member of this family on his summer holidays (4); it is a family of convenience. The topography of Aros, a tidal island, which was 'not properly a piece of the Ross, nor was it quite an islet' (6) itself emphasises this ability to both be a part of a whole while also remaining cut off from it. Charles, who lives on the mainland, is for short portions of time united with his family, from whom he is otherwise separated. Yet this distance between Charles and his family in fact increases during the summer he spends with them, which he recounts in 'The Merry Men'. As he steps into the kitchen for the first time since his previous return, Charles sees that it is full of new items, 'curtains of brocade hung from the window; a clock stood silent on the dresser; a lamp of brass was swinging from the roof; the table was set for dinner with the finest of linen and silver' (13). These items are, it turns out, plunder from the ships which do not survive the breakers known as the Merry Men. Charles, of course, does not initially realise this, yet for some reason he still finds that the objects fill him with 'indignation and a kind of anger' (13). To Charles, these items do not suit the rustic qualities of a house with

a ‘plain old kitchen’ (13) which he expects of his Highland home. As ‘incongruous additions’ (13) to a well-known room, the new ornaments emphasise the strangeness of the family home: “‘Mary, girl,’ said I, ‘this is the place I had learned to call my home, and I do not know it’” (14). Like so many of the other characters which we have considered in Stevenson’s works, Charles is an outsider in his own family – now that he has reunited with his family and become a member of it once more, the family is no longer familiar to him.

Indeed, throughout Stevenson’s works we encounter family groups which must be separated and disjointed to become familial. Henry James wrote that, to Stevenson, ‘the normal child is the child who absents himself from the family-circle’ (‘Robert Louis Stevenson’, 1239): Stevenson’s writing stages a movement away from a domestic focus on the family towards exile and alienation; it approaches the family from a different angle. This isolation, as we have seen, is a necessary feature of kinship, for social groups need the exclusion which comes hand in hand with exclusivity in order to remain a discrete group. The groups in Stevenson’s writings suggest that to be unrelated – to be in some way excluded from a family or to be a member of a quasi-family group – is to perform a crucial function of kinship, for it is such figures who uphold the very notion of kinship itself. It is never entirely possible, therefore, to be completely ‘without kith or kin’: like the tidal island of Aros (and the land mass off the Ross of Mull in *Kidnapped*), which is both isolated from and conjoined to the mainland, an individual always performs some kinship function, whether it is to be a part of a crowd or to be an ‘outsider’, against which a group can find definition. There is no real antithesis of familial relations, Stevenson’s works suggest: to be a member of the not-family is to be a fundamental

part of the family itself; to be the complete opposite of the family is to be a constant reminder of it. Kinship groups need outsiders to exist, as we have seen throughout this thesis, and specifically in the South Pacific island communities and Wiltshire's tabooed status on Falesá, which we considered in Chapter 3; familial groups are not simply characterised by conjugal or consanguineous relationships, but by exclusion, of who is *not* a part of them.

In this context, therefore, Stevenson's writing fits into neither the Victorian idealisation of the family, nor the simultaneous criticism that the family did not live up to these expectations, which I outlined at the beginning of this thesis. In contrast to both the widespread Victorian prioritisation and elevation of the family institution and the equal levels of concern and despair in mid-Victorian literature and social commentaries that, in fact, the family was falling apart, in Stevenson's works we discover that the unrelated and the family-like are, in fact, crucial to the formation of a family network. While not alienating us from the family entirely, they prioritise outsiders and unrelated kinship groups. In fact, it was not only Stevenson who found himself in this paradox – it was becoming increasingly apparent in the cultural and political environment in which he lived at the *fin-de-siècle*. As we have seen, the anthropological 'discoveries' of the late-nineteenth century, the increased freedoms for women, political campaigns and revolutions, the writing world – and the world it depicted – all made use of and recognised the importance of family-like relations and the role of the outsider in such communities. The families which Stevenson depicts invest in these ideas and in the 'primitive' objects of anthropological study to take the familiarity out of the familial; to make it strange and new.

And this need for estrangement within kinship forms poses problems for the idea of the ‘natural’ form of the consanguineous/conjugal family. The ‘traditional’ families which we have considered – the Balfour family of *Kidnapped*, the Duries of *The Master of Ballantrae* and the Luxmores in *The Dynamiter* – all prove to be unsustainable, as they are revealed not to depend on innate relations after all, and this myth on which they rely makes way for the importance of material or practical objects, such as property or money, in forming a family. In fact, the groups by which these familial ties are usurped – clubland circuits, clans and secret societies – become more family-like than the consanguineous/conjugal family; they all adopt a family-like form by overtly *not* being related. Familial relations, these groups suggest, are not a ‘natural’ bond, but a politic choice. Family, therefore, is not suggested to be an innate social condition, but instead becomes a community of pragmatism, and this characteristic spans both ‘primitive’ social groups, such as the totem family which we considered in the form of Scottish clans, to ‘civilised’ societies, like the gentleman’s clubs and secret Brotherhoods of the nineteenth century; in fact, the boundary between these two states is, as ever in Stevenson’s works, unclear. The familial, in Stevenson’s works, is something of which we become a part by being outside of the family.

Stevenson recognised these discrepancies in the concept of kinship in ‘The Foreigner at Home’ (1887). This essay largely focuses on a Scottish person’s feelings when visiting England, yet Stevenson also dwells on the Scottish identity itself and on its different interpretations of family:

The fact remains: in spite of the difference of blood and language, the Lowlander feels himself the sentimental countryman of the Highlander. When they meet abroad, they fall upon each other’s necks in spirit; even at home there is a kind of clannish intimacy in their talk. But from his compatriot in

the south the Lowlander stands consciously apart. He has had a different training; he obeys different laws; he makes his will in other terms, is otherwise divorced and married [...]. (29)

Within Scotland, there are different laws for Highlanders and Lowlanders – even those which create and disband families; family is a different configuration depending on where it is formed (the implication, of course, is that the Lowlands family is a legal structure and the Highlands clan is based upon an unwritten code of conduct – as we saw in *Kidnapped* in Chapter 2). And yet there is a mutual feeling of Scottishness between the two groups when they find themselves in completely alien territory: when abroad they become kin through the common knowledge that there is a yet more distant foreigner against whom they can identify themselves. Dependent on the trope of the outsider for its ever-changing form, kinship is a community of distance and difference.

While the focus on family groups in Stevenson's oeuvre has largely turned inwards to biographical traces found in the depictions, and on tensions between members of the family, there is, therefore, much more at stake. These works engage with ongoing debates in the nineteenth century about the state of familial relations, and as such they are preoccupied not with trivial domestic disputes, but with the importance of broader concepts such as the role of exclusion and exclusivity within kinship forms. Stevenson's works recognise the strangeness of the social form and the need for this familiar disjuncture for the very existence of kinship groups. And they suggest that there is nothing 'natural' about family: non-related groups can successfully adopt family relations. As such they look towards a modernity which prioritises fragmentation and exile; alienation, we have seen, dominates Stevenson's depictions of family groups by becoming central to the concept of kinship.

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